

# STORM IN THE PUNJAB

Kshitish Vedalankar

1985

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## Why in English

We had presented the book, 'Toofan ke Daur Se — Punjab' to Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan for his valuable comments. His reply was extremely encouraging. It is being reproduced below alongwith its English translation. It was due to Dr. Bachchans' inspiration that we have brought out the English rendition of the book. We hope it would reach a wider section of opinion-makers now.

हरिवंशराय बघवत  
'सोपान'

बो-८, गुलमोहर पार्क : नई दिल्ली-४१

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April 15, 1985

Honourable Brother,

Namaskar.

Thank you for your letter. I am grateful for the courtesy shown to me. I have read your book 'Toofan Ke Daur Se — Punjab' from the beginning to the end. I came to know and learn from it a lot many new and useful things.

No praise is enough for the research, the labour and understanding with which you have written the book and also for your frankness and daring. Anybody who wants to understand the Punjab problem must read your book.

The entire country will be affected by whatever solution is found to the Punjab Problem. Thereafter it is the duty of every vigilant Indian to understand this problem. Just as diagnosis is necessary before medical treatment, so is understanding necessary before finding a solution, and your book will be extremely helpful in providing that understanding.

I am of the opinion that this book should be translated into every Indian language, and the translation into Punjabi, Urdu and English must be done immediately. If possible it should be brought out in paperback so that it can reach the maximum number of people.

Personally speaking, our family is deeply concerned with the Sikhs' problem. Perhaps you are aware that my wife belongs to a Sikh family and many of our relatives are Sikhs.

I am an admirer of the Sikhs' energy and dynamism. If it is directed in the right direction, it can achieve many results with countrywide significance.

Day and night I wish and pray that this energy is channelised in the right directions.

With best regards,

**Harivansh Rai Bachchan**

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## Dedicated to the People of Punjab

अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसूनाम् (ऋग्वेद १०/१२५/३)

(मैं राष्ट्र के निवासियों को परस्पर मिलाने वाली राष्ट्र की आत्मा हूँ)

(I am the soul of the nation which unites its inhabitants.)

## An Epistle to Punjab

---

**My dear Punjab!**

Who could have imagined that you would allow elections to be held so peacefully? The Punjab accord had annoyed many. The elections also were a blow to some. But your love for democracy triumphed in the end.

The zeal for separatism kept you away from the national mainstream for the last four years. But the stream of unity flowing in the heart of the nation, at last manifested itself and you pronounced a verdict against terrorism.

All this would not have taken place if the Sant of Sangrur (Longowal) had not sacrificed himself. He might have been in the wilderness for a long time, searching for a perception of nationhood; but once he had realised it, he stood up firmly against all adverse circumstances. Like Mahatma Gandhi, this "Gandhi of Punjab" was also murdered. He reached a peak of martyrdom which no Akali leader had ever achieved.

Had he committed a crime in signing the Punjab accord? Had he been punished for that 'sin'?

Then how shall we view the sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur who was called '*Hind ki Chadar*' and protector of symbols of Hinduism like the *tilak* and *junju*?. And the tenth Guru Gobind Singh who sacrificed his father, his mother and four sons in order to protect the Hindu religion?

What shall we call the *Panj Piaras* none of whom was a Sikh nor a resident of Punjab?

Which was that land for whom Guru Nanak had sung his hymns of '*Babar Vani*' and courted imprisonment at the hands of Babar? What was that perception of nationhood for which he traversed on foot the expanse of this land, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kamrup to Kandhar?

Which was that land wherein all the Gurus spread their gospel and to protect which motherland they undertook to fight the opponents?

The call to adopt which universal gospel figures again and again in Guru Granth Sahib?

The book in which the name of *Hari* occurs 10,000 times, *Ram* 2400 times, *Brahma* 550 times, *Onkar* 400 times, and *Veda-Puran-Smriti* and *Shastras* 350 times; which uses the names of the One without attributes like *Niranjan*, *Niranakar* 2,600 times and with attributes like *Murari*, *Madhav*, *Keshav*, *Mohan* etc., 2,000 times, and which uses words connected with the *Puranas* 2700 times and *Ved-antic* words 1,250 times; includes many *Puranas* tales and which repeatedly condemns hypocrisy, superstition and rituals, which inspires true worship of God and which includes the sayings of all the Hindu Saints of Bhakti-age — can there be any doubt what gospel is it preaching?

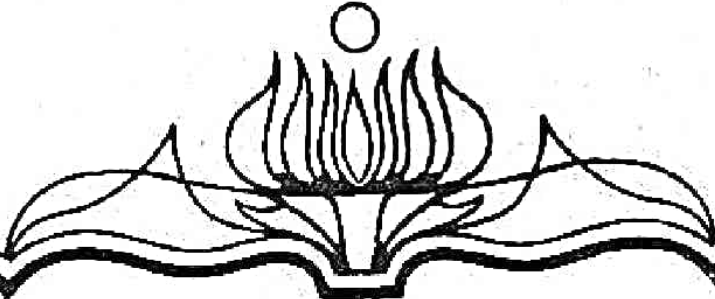
Keeping all this in mind an attempt has been made here to uncover a few pages of history. History does not merely contain the triumphs and victories, instead, like a rain water river it carries with it a lot of rubbish too. History is useless if we do not learn from its mistakes and chart out the course for future without the lessons it teaches.

A new horizon has opened up before you in the form of the new Government which has come riding the chariot of a democratic election. In the last few years you have been passing through the dreadful dungeon of darkness. Now a ray of sunshine is visible in that blind lane.

Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed himself for the sake of national unity and as a result the Congress reaped the fruit of 30-year continuous rule. For the same national unity, Indira Gandhi gave her life and consequently Rajiv Gandhi triumphed with 400 seats in Lok Sabha. When the 'Gandhi of Punjab' died a martyr, he paved the way for an unprecedented victory for Akali Dal.

Dear Punjab! Irrigated by five rivers you came to be known as 'Punjab' but now you have only three rivers left. Even in these three you have allowed blood to flow so often. Now history has given you the opportunity to replace it with a stream of friendship, love, communal harmony and national unity. Lest you fail.

Now on this day of Gandhi Jayanti, I wish and pray that you keep marching from darkness towards light and skilfully play your role in the resurgence of India. The blessings of the Gandhis (Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Gandhi of Punjab) and the best wishes of Rajiv Gandhi are with you.



### Three Questions

A foreigner asked a Japanese student,  
"Whom do you consider the greatest  
man on earth?"

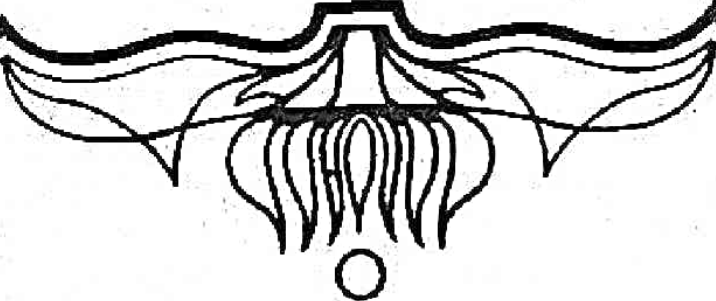
"Lord Buddha", was the answer.

The foreigner asked again, "What if  
somebody attacks Lord Buddha?"

"We shall behead that somebody",  
the student replied.

The foreigner asked his final question,  
"What if Lord Buddha attacks  
Japan?"

The reply was, "We shall behead Lord  
Buddha".



# 1

## The Night of Death

---



ONLY the blazing sun was out; everybody else was indoors. In north India, particularly in Punjab, the end of May and the beginning of June is a time of fierce summer. But this time it was not the heat merely of weather. The earth and sky together were raining fire and the people caught between the two had another cause for distress.

All those whose interests were hurt by the birth of Bangladesh were looking for an opportunity to get even with India. Those who thought that the break-up of their empire had been compensated by the partition of India had their pride rudely shaken. India had fragmented their creation of Pakistan. Pakistan itself was vitally struck as a part of it had been separated, but Britain and America were no less stunned. Therefore, they all joined together to openly support Khalistan. In India too the supporters of Khalistan started saying that if Bangladesh could be created with the support of India, why could not a Khalistan be created with the support of Pakistan, Britain, Canada and America?

The Khalistan supporters have never considered why India had a vital role to play in Bangladesh's fight for freedom. There is no parallel between the two situations. West Pakistan was treating East Pakistan as its colony. By virtue of his party's victorious majority in the elections, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman should have been the Prime Minister of Pakistan, but President Yahya Khan had him arrested and preparations were made to have him killed in jail. A grave had already been dug for him inside jail. The Pakistani Army drove over one crore people into India as refugees, directly affecting the financial position of India. In such circumstances India had no option left but to take some action. Behind the demand for Khalistan, however, there is nothing but an imaginary feeling of discrimination against the Sikhs.

This false sentiment has slowly encouraged terrorism in the last four years.

This terrorism created such an atmosphere of murders, dacoities, looting and lawlessness that the suffering people of Punjab started crying for mercy. The very people who at the birth of Bangladesh had hailed Indira as the demon-slaying *Durga* now started wondering why this *Devi* had been paralysed.

Bhindranwale himself believed so and his friends kept drilling it into him that he was God manifest and nobody could harm him.

But a skilful doctor never uses his knife on an unripe boil. He operates only when the boil is fully riped. And it is for the doctor alone, and not the patient, to decide whether the boil has fully ripened or not.

The terrorising arms reached such lengths as to assassinate people like the venerated scholar and saint Giani Pratap Singh, progressive editor of *Preet Lari* and a clean-shaven Sikh Sumit, the promoter of *Punjabiya* in Punjab Prof Vishwanath Tiwari, MP, the Amritsar Janata Party president Harbans Lal Khanna and the *Hind Samachar* group editor Ramesh Chandra, then involuntarily voices started rising in Punjab that the vessel of terrorist sins was now full to the brim.

Then on June 2 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi addressed the nation on radio and television. She asked the Akalis to stop the violent agitation and come to the negotiating table. At the same time she ordered the Army to march into Punjab.

But Mrs Gandhi's appeal did not appeal to the Akalis. Within 24 hours about 70,000 troops reached Punjab. They not only encircled the Golden Temple in Amritsar but spread out in all the districts of Punjab to deal with any untoward development.

On 3 June curfew was clamped on Amritsar, first of 36-hour duration and later extended to 60 hours. All rail, road and air movement was stopped. Press censorship was imposed. Entry of foreigners was banned. The Attari and Wagah borders were sealed. Border Security Force battalions were stationed on the Indo-Pak border in Punjab and steps were taken to ensure that no terrorists escaped into the neighbouring States.

All was set for the operation. The Government was aware that the terrorists had collected a variety of heavy weaponry and also had fortified positions in the Golden Temple, but there was not enough information about the number of terrorists. The location of the fortifications was also not fully known. But it was resolved that the situation should not be allowed to go out of hand and therefore speed was of the essence in the Army action.

The Prime Minister herself named this Army action as 'Operation

Bluestar' keeping in mind the flag and blue turban of the Akalis.

All activity under this operation was kept so secret that before the entry of troops in Punjab, neither Governor Bhairav Dutt Pande nor Police Chief Pritam Singh Bhinder were aware of it. Even in the Central Cabinet very few members had a clue about it.

The significance of speed can be appreciated from the example of Bangladesh. In 1971 when the Pakistani Army in Dacca was surrounded from all sides, then to help it out America sent its Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal. China too sent its ship to Gopalpur for Pakistani troops to escape. Would the Pakistani troops surrender first or the American Seventh Fleet, by engaging the Indian troops, provide an opportunity to Pakistani troops to escape? This was the issue. It was a race of time.

Then the Indian Army attacked the Governor's residence in Dacca. Its dome was so accurately bombed that it collapsed and the Pakistani Governor occupying it ran and took shelter in a bunker. In addition, Indian paratroops were dropped into the area. Field Marshal Manekshaw broadcast a message for Pakistani troops and also had leaflets containing a message dropped from aeroplanes. It said, "We know everything about how and from where you plan to run away. We have sealed all escape routes. Now you have no way to flee. Also, 5,000 paratroops have landed in Dacca. You are surrounded from all sides. Therefore instead of losing your lives, it is better that you surrender".

Pakistan's 90,000 troops surrendered before the Indian Army and an unprecedented event of history had taken place. The American Seventh Fleet and the Chinese ship were left watching. In the same way it was a question of time here also.

### **The Bhindranwale Plan**

The following was Bhindranwale's comprehensive plan to gain control of Punjab:

There are 52 per cent Sikhs in Punjab and 48 per cent Hindus. Out of this 48 per cent, about 25 per cent are Harijans. Of the remaining 23 per cent caste Hindus, if one fourth are put to the sword, the remaining three-fourths will on their own flee Punjab. There was no need to kill the Harijans because later they could be forced or scared into becoming Sikhs and would be useful as slaves or labour.

An essential part of the plan was to be accomplished on June 5. On that day 4,000 Hindu intellectuals were to be killed. A "blue-list" of their names had been prepared. Similarly, the plan extended to

other towns as well. Weapons and trained people had reached prominent *gurdwaras* in entire Punjab. In the blue list were included names of lawyers, doctors, engineers, industrialists and educationists. A network of spies and saboteurs had already infiltrated into the ranks of Sikh soldiers and among the Sikh community in the entire country. About 250 Bhindranwale supporter terrorists had reached sensitive areas in the country in order to disrupt the communications system and the transport of troops. The time fixed for this collective murder was from 10 p.m. on 5 June to 9 a.m. on 6 June. The way to be adopted was that young terrorists with stenguns would knock at the doors of listed people at midnight and would open up as soon as the doors were ajar.

Pakistan had given the assurance that it would keep five divisions of its Army ready on the border. Armoured divisions would form part of this array. And these would all be ready to attack India.

Apart from this, 10,000 Pakistani troops in the garb of *Nihangs*, Sikh soldiers and trained priests would enter India at the appointed signal.

These Pakistani troops would capture three districts — Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur — on the border. After capturing these districts and cutting off the lone rail and road link with Jammu and Kashmir, the formation of Khalistan would be formally announced on June 11. Amritsar would be its Capital. A Khalistan radio station would be set up in the Golden Temple. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale would be the President of Khalistan and Major General Shabeg Singh its Army Chief. Pakistan, America and Britain would give it recognition immediately.

It is said that the secret service of a friendly country informed India of this sensational conspiracy and also gave the Central Government a tape containing conversation between a Pakistani General and Bhindranwale over a high-powered transmitter.

The Secret documents recovered from the Golden Temple after the operation confirm this conspiracy. Then came the fifth of June.

### **The Fifth of June**

People remained indoors in the day because of the strict curfew. When in the evening the burning sun went its way in the west, people went up to their roof tops. Hardly anybody slept that night in Amritsar town. Never in its centuries-old history was the night so long.

An operation of this magnitude against terrorists had not taken place in any country of the world. The commandos built a replica of

## Preface

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**F**EW could have envisaged even five years ago the scenario that has unfolded itself in Punjab. In 1980, we thought that the worst that could happen to India had already happened, and no one was aware that the nation was edging towards a cliff far more awesome and murderous. The emergency was behind us. The passions that it aroused were the intensest since independence, what with seething anger on one side and stolid, unfeeling authority on the other. The passions continued in their torrid course even after Mrs. Gandhi's electoral defeat in 1977, and assumed shapes which were weird and grotesque. In 1980, when she came back to power, events had come full circle, and the country was face to face with the stark and stunning axiom that a non-Congress government at the centre was, an utterly unviable and hence an impossible proposition in India.

When the nation was stewing in its own secretions of 1974–1979 and was settling down to another customary round of prolonged non-government followed by a bout or two of sudden-government, came Punjab. In 1980 it was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but by 1982 it had covered a large part of the Indian skies, and by 1983 we were in a gloomy, dark-brown purgatory. The gloom became a shade more depressing every day, and one wondered if Mrs. Gandhi had lost her capacity of sudden, electric response. She hadn't, and that is why India today is a nation which has been pushed into the chasm and is yet standing tantalisingly on the cliff.

The events in Punjab have compelled everyone to take another look at the antecedents and the roots. There was a time when our view of India was Banglacentric; in the last three years it has become Punjab-centred with a vengeance. New patterns are being perceived in old, forgotten morchas and movements, and men and their motives are being interpreted anew. Frankly, no one outside Punjab was aware until 1983 that despite their zest and gusto and material

success, the Sikhs were such an agonised, crisis-ridden, spectre-haunted community. Analysts would be arguing for years about who raised the spectre, who aggravated the crisis and who made the agony more excruciating. But the point remains that inside the Sikh psyche there was something which could be aroused, manipulated and mobilised.

Shri Kshitish has taken a look at the antecedents and the roots in his present book on Punjab, and he has woven a pattern. Few Sikhs would agree that the pattern has been one of intransigence on their part, and a number of them would argue that the boot is, and has always been, on the other leg. But after the events of 1979-85, the time has now come for introspection and penitence. Akali polemics should now be read only to find out what has been gnawing at the Sikh heart. And non-Sikh polemics should be read to discover how deeply a brand of Sikh politics has hurt this nation.

Shri Kshitish's book conveys the hurt and the consternation. In that sense, it is useful in understanding the dialectic of those events which came so near to disrupting this country in 1984. It is not an instant book, one would not be able to wish it away next year, or the year after the year after, because the emotion which this book represents is a feature of India's landscape which cannot be ignored.

September 11, 1985

**Rajendra Mathur**  
(Editor *'Naubharat Times'*)

Golden Temple in the hilly tract of Chakrata and rehearsed for the operation. In the end of May, President Zail Singh cut short his visit to North-Eastern India and returned to Delhi. Army Chief Gen A.S. Vaidya also came back from Srinagar and inspected the setting up of an Army control unit at Panchkula's vast Chandi Mandir. The President and the Prime Minister had a long meeting before giving their consent for the operation.

How painful was the decision to order the Army operation, and how far-reaching it was, is evident from the fact that the Prime Minister, famous for her perseverance and fortitude, could not sleep that night.

A glimpse of the preparedness of the terrorists can be had from the Governments' White Paper.

On 3 and 4 June the Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police resorted to stray firing to test the fortifications of the terrorists. It was thought that perhaps the terrorists would understand the seriousness of the situation and the troops may not have to enter the Golden Temple and bloodshed may be avoided. But the terrorists were no novices. On the evening of 5 June repeated loud speaker appeals were made to them to surrender. In the beginning 129 persons surrendered but after that they replied to the appeals with bullets.

By 7 p.m. the Army started taking over important buildings around the Golden Temple on which the terrorists had built battle positions.

According to the instructions of Shabeg Singh, the terrorists had hidden powerful explosives in the water tank with the aim of blowing up *Harmandir Sahib*. Wearing the armour of foreign-trained explosives experts, a dozen divers were stationed inside the temple and on the roof. These explosives were to be blown at the dead of night. The Army commanders were aware of this. In the evening they climbed the roofs of nearby buildings to have a good look at the Temple *Parikarma* and to assess ways to save the Temple.

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The massacre plan of June 5 night is indicated by the following incident which came to light after three months. It was published in the Sept. 1 Issue of Blitz:

"On the night of 5 June, Muradpura village *Sarpanch* Sikandar Singh made an announcement on loudspeakers that the Army had entered the Golden Temple and according to previous instructions, they should also carry out their plan. Muradpura village is near Tarn Taran, 25 Kms from Amritsar. Five youngmen of the village — Raju, Darshan Singh, Kuldip Singh, Kulwant Singh and Ajmer Singh gathered at the house of Banta Singh. They drank in plenty and came out carrying two swords from the house of Raju . . . Vrindavan had a hint of the attack, therefore he slept on the roof so that at any sign of danger he could shout for help. At 1 a.m. after midnight Kuldip Singh and Kulwant Singh scaled the

They prepared two schemes. One was to defuse the explosives laid out around the Golden Temple and the second to take away Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal and *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee* President G.S. Tohra so as to save their lives. This had to be done because the terrorists were after their blood too.

It is to be remembered that Mr Tohra had declared his inability to bring round Bhindranwale. The latter could not have made *Guru Nanak Niwas* and later the *Akal Takht* the centre of his violent activities without the permission of Mr Tohra. When, at the suggestion of a Pakistani General, Bhindranwale went and settled in *Akal Takht*, a newsman asked Mr Tohra why was it so when even the builder of *Akal Takht* had never made it his residence. Mr Tohra replied, "Bhindranwale is a king; he can stay wherever he likes". But when Bhindranwale turned against his benefactors, Longowal and Tohra both became nervous. Tension between Tohra and Bhindranwale increased when the latter accused SGPC secretary Gurcharan Singh of being responsible for the murder of Bhindranwale's man Sodhi. Tohra had not taken any action then. In fact it is said that Tohra had himself gone to Punjab Governor Pande and given his consent for Army action.

---

wall and jumped into the house. In the courtyard slept his 15 year old son Manoj. The two attackers cut off his wrists. Wounded Manoj hid below the cot. In their drunken state the attackers went on lashing at the cot. When they thought that Manoj was dead they entered the house. Inside slept two daughters of Vrindavan — Seema (10) and Mamata (12). Both were attacked with swords and both died on the spot. When Vrindavan's wife Veera shouted for help the attackers cut off her left leg and wounded her in one hand. Veera became unconscious. . . . The second son Ashok escaped and ran into the house of neighbour Raju. But Raju was in the group of conspirators and had drinks with them. He locked Ashok in a room. . . . Vrindavan's servant Swaran and youngest son Rajkumar were hiding. The attackers thrust a sword into the stomach of 16-year old Rajkumar. His intestines were exposed. . . . Vrindavan's neighbour said that after this Kuldip Singh and Kulwant Singh scaled the wall and ran towards the *gurdwara*. Then only could Vrindavan summon courage to shout for help. Dharamvir, son of neighbour Ruplal, ran all the way and informed the BSF troops about the incident. On 6 June some soldiers came and took away *Sarpanch* Sikandar Singh with them. In interrogation he revealed the names of the five accused. Police took them to jail but after some days they were let off. Despite accounts of eye-witnesses the police did not register the names of the accused but only entered that some unknown persons had attacked. It is said the police had been given Rs 1 lakh to keep quiet. . . . Vrindavan alongwith a friend Harimohan, went to the nearby military camp. There a Major told them that this case had been referred to the police, but it seems the police has let off the criminals."

## The Operation

The specially-trained suicide squad of commandos was used for the first time. They were divided into five groups of four jawans each headed by an officer. The purpose of keeping an officer was to see that the jawans in their enthusiasm did not fire at Harmandar Sahib.

The first group was of five divers. They entered from the *Ghantaghar* on the *Jallianwala Bagh* side. They were dressed in black diving suits. They removed their shoes, covered their heads — some of them had flowing beards — touched the marble stairs and put their fingers on their foreheads in respectful salute. Thus they marched forward quietly reciting the *Gurbani*.

There was no war frenzy, no bugles sounding. They had to quietly slip away from *Darshani Dyodhi* and enter the *Sarovar* via the *Parikarma* in order to remove the explosives. It was 10.30 at night. It seems the terrorists knew about the exact time of the operation. They lay in ambush. As soon as the commando team entered the *Dyodhi*, bullets began to rain on them. One by one the commandos fell like sitting ducks. But even in this commotion one jawan managed to reach the *Sarovar* bank. He had been hit in the stomach. A blood stream burst from his stomach like a fountain. He looked back to see his companions falling down. By that time bullets were raining from all sides. Terrorists emerged from manholes, threw bombs on the jawans and disappeared into pillboxes. It was like a calamity.

The plan to cross the *Sarovar* was abandoned. The men were ordered to proceed direct to the *Akal Takht* via *Guru Ramdas Sarai*. The terrorists had converted *Akal Takht*, the refuge of *Bhindranwale* and his fanatic supporters, into an invincible fortress.

This was a strange operation. There was a strict injunction not to fire towards *Harmandar Sahib* although constant firing was on from that side. The group of soldiers that advanced now had no deadly weapons on them. They carried only gas cylinders with the aim of ejecting the terrorists. They were followed by jawans with fire-fighting equipment tied to their backs. The purpose was to defuse the fires likely to erupt due to terrorist firing on gas cylinders.

But even gas bombs failed to drive them out of their hideouts as the gas could not penetrate the sandbagging of the openings. And the wind direction was also not favourable.

The Army commanders again changed their plans. They sent an armoured car with such dazzling lights on the *Parikarma* that mere looking at it could damage the eyes. But even this bedazzling light could not bring the terrorists out. Instead they started such a

cannonade that the entire *Parikarma* path became a massacre street. Bullets rained and machineguns crackled sending 800 rounds a minute.

It can only be imagined how many officers and *jawans* died here. From the roof of *Akal Takht*, from ventilators, from holes made into marble walls and from every storey of *Akal Takht* bullets came like angry poisonous snakes slaying the *jawans*.

The plans failed one after the other. And there was little time left. If before daybreak this cannonade from *Akal Takht* was not stopped, there was another danger looming large.

### Another danger

The danger was that as soon as the information reached the villages that Army had entered the Golden Temple, villages upon villages would be empty. Lakhs of sentimental people would start marching towards the Golden Temple. It is easy to say that the Army was out and it would deal with everyone. But there is a limit. How many people can the Army tackle? And if the crowds started killing Hindus, then the Punjab which could not be destroyed by the bullets of the terrorists would be destroyed by the fire of communalism. This was not an imaginary fear. There was enough evidence of such danger.

People from neighbouring villages had started trekking towards Amritsar. Helicopter patrols kept informing the police on wireless about spots where people were collecting. They instructed the police to shoot on crowds collecting anywhere in the streets, lanes or localities. But still tension kept increasing even in villages where so far there had been communal harmony.

In Golvad village, 25 Km from Amritsar, had gathered about 30,000 people armed with rifles, sticks, axes and other traditional weapons. Led by Baba Vidhi Chand Mahant they started marching towards Amritsar. On the way they killed Hindus and kept vowing to protect the Golden Temple. Similar crowds assembled near Ajnala and Amritsar airport Rajasansi. Tanks had to be sent to discourage them. Crowds were noticed around Batala and Gurdaspur also.

A big crowd had assembled at Mehta Chowk, the former headquarters of Bhindranwale. An Army patrol had to be quickly sent there. In Verka, famous for milk and milk products, armed police could not control a crowd. It killed two policemen and snatched their rifles. Fortunately, a helicopter patrol troupe saw the advancing mob

and arranged for troops despatch thereby preventing communal tensions from escalating.

The Army commanders knew that at such times crowds slowly swell, and as the crowds swell their anger also increases. If no tough steps were taken immediately, then Amritsar could be faced with any number of *Jallianwala* situations.

In the area around the Sarovar, the troops entered the Northern gate and the library in the South. The terrorists were firing from machineguns stationed at many places inside the library building and were also throwing grenades. During this phase of the operation, fire was seen in the library. The fire fighting troops ran again and again to put out this fire but the machinegun firing frustrated their efforts. By the time the firing positions of the terrorists were captured, the library had been burnt and the Toshakhana (museum) had also been damaged. It was now 1 o'clock after midnight. Time was running out.

### **Longowal and Tohra Surrender**

The Army commanders sent groups of commandos to bring out Longowal and Tohra. Announcements were made on loud speakers that there was now no danger in coming out via Guru Ramdas Serai and that it was better to surrender immediately.

Playing on their life, the *jawans* cut off Langar and Serai from the side of Golden Temple and Akal Takht. On the appeal for surrender, the SGPC workers and pilgrims staying in the Serai surrendered alongwith women and children. About 350 people surrendered near Guru Nanak Niwas. Among these were Longowal and Tohra.

To prevent their surrender the terrorists fired at them and threw grenades. In this senseless shooting, 70 defenceless persons, including 30 women and five children, were killed.

The mystery of the killing of these 70 people was cleared only in the White Paper. This fact had not come to light till then. How heartless were these terrorists! These innocent people, the women and children, had done nothing to earn their wrath. They had only gone to the Temple to pay their respects, thinking it to be a pious and holy place. How could they know that the terrorists wanted to use them as hostages.

In this blind firing, Gurcharan Singh died, against whom Bhindranwale had levelled the charge of conspiracy to kill Sodhi. Bagga Singh was also killed who openly used to criticise religious terrorism. But the commandos were able to bring alive Longowal and

Tohra amid the rain of bullets.

It was 4 a.m. now. The last quarter of the night of death had begun.

There was no intention in the beginning to attack *Akal Takht*. But when repeated appeals for surrender were replied to with repeated cannonades and one after the other soldiers fell; then helicopters were sent up to take stock of the situation and on their signal armoured vehicles were sent. The terrorists used anti-tank rockets which came as a surprise to the Army.

### **The Akal Takht Operation**

Then tanks were sent on the *Parikrama*. With the very first shell the *Akal Takht* dome fell. There was a stampede among the exposed terrorists who had fortified themselves on the roof. The troops advanced in the shadow of tanks. By daybreak the Army succeeded in effectively silencing gunmen inside the *Akal Takht*.

As the troops entered the *Akal Takht*, hand-to-hand fights began in each room. The terrorists started running towards the first and the ground floor.

Then there was a loud explosion. The troops heard terrorists exchanging fire among themselves in the ground floor and the basement. It seems the majority were in favour of surrendering instead of losing their lives. But Bhindranwale's men were against giving themselves up. Both sides started firing at each other.

Some terrorists tried to run out of *Akal Takht* in order to free some areas from the control of troops but they were beaten back.

Then a group of 10 terrorists surrendered by showing the white flag. There were fights in each room and the troops succeeded in freeing the main part of *Akal Takht* from terrorists although the battle continued on the ground floor and in the basement.

The Army had come to know of Bhindranwale's escape plan on the night of 5 June itself. According to this plan, Longowal and Tohra were to be murdered in *Teja Singh Samundri Hall* itself and *Harmandir Sahib* blown up. Then through the tunnel in the basement of *Akal Takht*, Bhindranwale and Shabeg Singh would reach the *Ghurra Sahib gurdwara* from where they would escape to an unknown place.

That is why the Army priority was first to defuse the explosives hidden in this *Sarovar* to blow up *Harmandir Sahib* and then to rescue Longowal and Tohra. If the Army action had been delayed even by an hour, then Bhindranwale and Shabeg would have escaped after

having Longowal and Tohra killed. Bhindranwale had kept Sandhu in *Harmandir Sahib* to fulfill this mission.

In the afternoon of 6 June, the Army again appealed through loudspeakers for surrender. As a result, 200 terrorists including 22 who had come from *Harmandir Sahib*, gave themselves up. The Chief priest and two other priests were found safe in *Harmandir Sahib*.

The continued resistance from the basement and first floor of *Akal Takht* was also contained by the night of 6 June. After this the troops inspected the ground floor and the basement. Thirty-four bodies were found on the ground floor. Among these were bodies of Bhindranwale, his would be successor Amrik Singh and Shabeg Singh who had been cashiered from the Army for corruption and in revenge joined Bhindranwale to mastermind his military operations.

Later, when newsmen entered the *Akal Takht* basement, they found the place knee-deep in empty shells — proof of the heavy shelling from *Akal Takht*.

According to the Government's White Paper 544 terrorists were killed, 121 injured and 4712 arrested. In the Golden Temple area alone, 493 were killed and 86 injured.

The Army casualties were four officers, four JCOs and 84 *jawans* killed in the operation. Except one JCO and eight *jawans*, all others died in the Golden Temple area itself. Among the injured were 15 officers, 16 JCOs and 253 *jawans*.

The heavy casualties in the Army show that the Armymen acted with great patience and restraint. They took full care that no harm was done to *Harmandir Sahib*. If *Akal Takht* had not been turned into a regular fort from where ceaseless firing continued and if the terrorists had surrendered following the Army's appeal, even this sacred monument would have escaped damage.

### **Inhumanity**

The tales of terrorists' cruelty had been heard from many people. Even during the operation they did not flinch from displaying their inhumanity. They massacred 70 of those men, women and children who had surrendered at the appeal of the Army. Two commissioned officers were caught by the terrorists and hacked mercilessly. An unarmed doctor who had gone to treat the wounded in the *Akal Takht* had his hands cut off and was later killed. One junior commissioned officer was skinned and a bomb placed in his body which was then set afire and thrown from the *Akal Takht* top floor.

On that 5 June night of death there were simultaneous operations

in 42 places in Punjab, where the Army repeatedly appealed to the terrorists to surrender. But when the terrorists did not oblige, the Army entered these areas in separate actions.

There was token resistance at some places but at the Moga and Muktsar gurdwaras the terrorists put up a stiff fight. In Faridkot, Ropar, Patiala and Chowk Mehta also terrorists fired at the troops. Large stores of arms were recovered from Chowk Mehta, Ropar and Patiala gurdwaras. The strongest resistance came from the Muktsar gurdwara. But by 6 June evening everything was under control there also.

On 6 June afternoon newspapers spread the information throughout the world that Golden Temple had been freed from terrorists. But the operation which began on 5 June night was actually over only on 6 June evening or 7 June morning.

This story will be incomplete without recounting the following episode:

The 94 year old mother of Operation Bluestar Commander Major General Ranjit Singh Dayal sat worrying without food in Simla. On 6 June morning Major General Dayal went to Simla by helicopter and assured his mother that *Harmandir Sahib* was absolutely safe. Then only mother and son partook of food together.

Thus the night of death came to an end, but the new dawn was still far away.

# 2

## The Coming of Nanak

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PUNJAB is the crown of India.

It was the birthplace of ancient Aryan culture and the Vedic culture also flowered and grew here. It was here that the powerful habitations took root. Their glory remained undiminished till about 3000 B.C.

Punjab has also been the door to India.

Whenever foreigners attacked India, they entered the country through Punjab. Right from Alexander to Shaka-Hun-Mongol-Tatar-Mughals — all came via Punjab. As long as Punjab was strong, India's independence remained supreme. Whenever Punjab became weak, India's freedom was also threatened.

About 2500 years ago, Iran's emperor Dara extended control over some parts of Punjab. After this Alexander the Great, who left Greece with dreams of conquering the world, attacked Punjab at the invitation of Taxila King Ambhi. On the way he ravaged Iran-Afghanistan. With this started the ill-fortunes of this country.

It was a son of Punjab, Chandragupta Maurya, who with the help of his able counsellor, Acharya Chanakya, defeated and turned out the Greeks. But after the decline of Mauryan empire, about 195 B.C. Menander entered Punjab and captured the area upto Narmada. After this, the *Shakas*, the *Hunas* and the *Kushans* also ruled this area for sometime.

Later, when King Dahir of Sindh controlled some areas of Punjab, foreigners started attacking India taking advantage of the feuds among the countrymen. This also opened the way for the pillage of Mahmud Gaznavi. Slowly, exploiting the enmity and jealousies among the Rajput Kings, Mahmud Gaznavi defeated Prithviraj and laid the foundation of Muslim rule in this country.

Thereafter almost the entire India went into their control. Whenever Punjab became weak, the attacks came turning power sometimes

from Turks to Mughals, and sometimes Iranians, Mongols or Afghans seized power and with wave upon wave of attacks they plundered areas upto Delhi.

### **Birth of Nanak**

It was in these circumstances that Guru Nanak was born on *Kartika Purnima* day in 1469.

In the 500 years before the birth of Guru Nanak, there had been about 70 invasions of India and in these it were the people of Punjab who suffered the most. Forcible conversions, plunder, killings and dishonour were the order of the day. Sikandar Lodhi had Bodhan killed merely because he had said his religion was as good as Islam.

Nanak was then 20. He said with an aching heart:

"The spirit of sacrifice has disappeared from the earth. It has flown away like a bird. Kings have become butchers. Bribery is rampant. Even access to the king's court is not possible without bribery."

In 1521 when Babar invaded India via Tashkent and put to the sword thousands of men, women and children. Then his heart gave vent to the following sentiments of anguish:

"O Creator of this world: How can you call yourself blameless? You yourself have sent Yamaraj in the garb of Babar. Why don't these outrageous massacres and heart-rending cries of women and children move you? O so-called Protector of the world: Please explain why does a ferocious lion attack and kill poor and defenceless deer and you keep watching this silently?"

The 15th and 16th century in Indian history has been called *Bhakti Kaal* or age of devotion. Though the *Bhakti* movement was of a long duration and widespread, it is noteworthy that there was significant contribution to it from the *Bhakti* poets of North, South, East and West. It is astonishing how in the 15th and 16th century *Bhakta* poets appeared almost simultaneously and the *Bhakti* wave spread strongly. But more than the surprise element, it indicated that from a cultural point of view, all parts of this country are joined together in one common bond and that spiritual bond is so strong that the power of the invading foreigners and their heavy blows could not break it.

### **Bhakti Kaal's Uniqueness**

The simultaneous rise of Aalaavar sant. Madhvacharya, and Vallabhacharya etc in the South; Sant Tukaram, Gnyaneshwar, Parmanad, Namdev, Guru Ramdas in Maharashtra; Chaitanya Dev

Mahaprabhu, Jaidev, Haridas in Bengal Shankar Dev in Assam, Swati Tirumal in distant Kerala, Narsi Mehta in Gujarat, Meera and Rajul in Rajasthan; Surdas, Tulsidas and Kabir in North India, Sadhna in Sind, and Guru Nanak in Punjab gives evidence of the presence of an immanent internal current which cannot but fascinate a historian.

There is another feature of the *Bhakti* movement. These *Bhaktas* were poets, saints and preachers, all rolled into one. But we wish to draw attention to another astonishing fact which is quite different.

At that time the Mughal empire was at the peak of its power. Mughal Kings have also been notorious for their atrocities. But this *Bhakti* movement not only destroyed the walls of rich-poor, high and low castes but also demolished the wall of religion. Otherwise how was it possible that Akbar's own aide, Bairam Khan's son, the brave general Abdur Rahim Khankhana, could write poetry in worship of Rama and Krishna and become famous in Hindi literature as the Rahim of '*Rahim Ke Dohe*' (couplets). What can you say about Rustam Khan Pathan who changed his name to Rasakhan and gave an extraordinary evidence of Krishna devotion by writing famous verses to the effect:

"If I be born man again, I should be born in *Brij*", (the land of Krishna.)"

That Muslim poetess Taj (Taj Khan Begum of Agra) cannot be treated inferior to any Hindu *Bhakta* poet, who in Krishna-*bhakti* declared:

"I shall bear insults too for your sake; leaving *Qoran* and *Kalma*, I shall sing your praises, O son of Nanda, I am so smitten that though a Mughal, I shall live like a Hindu woman."

सुनो दिल जानी मेरे दिल की कहानी,  
तेरे दस्त हूँ बिकानी बदनामी भी सहूँगी मैं ।  
देव पूजा ठानी, तज कलमा कुरानी,  
मैं नमाज हूँ भुलानी तेरे गुननि गहूँगी मैं ॥  
सावला सलौना सिरताज सिर कुल्लेदार,  
तेरे नेह दाघ में निदाघ है दहूँगी मैं ।  
नन्द के कुमार कुर्बान तेरी सूख पै,  
हूँ तो मुगलानी, हिन्दुवानी है रहूँगी मैं ॥

Malik Mohammad Jayasi went even further and created an epic *Padmavat* on the subject of Maharani Padmavati, which is a treasure of literature. In this *Bhakti Kaal*, there have been at least 50 Muslims who have added to Hindi literature by writing *Bhakti* poetry. It is for

these Muslim poets that Hindi's father figure, Bhartendu Harischandra wrote:

"For these God's beloved Muslims, I shall sacrifice crores of Hindus."

इन मुसलमान हरिजन पर कोटिक हिन्दू वारिये ॥

### **Bhakti Movement Inevitable**

The coming of the age of *Bhakti* was also inevitable in history.

In the *Vedic* age, three ways - Knowledge (*Gyan*) action (*Karma*) and worship (*Upasna*) — were prescribed to pursue the four main aims of human existence viz discharge of duty (*Dharma*) — acquisition of wealth (*Arth*) — gratifications (*Kaam*) — and final emancipation (*Moksh*). There was no compulsion to follow any one of the pursuits nor the right to any one of the ways. By nature man tends to keep to one exclusive track but for a balanced life it is necessary that the normal functions in life are not ignored. The absence of balance creates disorder in social life.

A balanced life was in fact the ideal of *Vedic* age. This balance was proposed not only in the four pursuits but also in the three paths prescribed to pursue these. When *yajna* became a ritual excess, Buddhism and Jainism came forth to counter it. But with the patronage of royal power, their centres degenerated from ascetic life to luxury and pleasure. Slowly decadent sects like *Vajrayaan*, *Tantrayan* and *Sahajyan* became dominant. To offset this damage and to restore again the path of knowledge came Shankaracharya on the scene.

But the path of knowledge has never been easy for the masses, partly because it demands education. This was an age when education was the exclusive preserve of the *Brahmins*; when depriving women and the low-castes of education had religious sanction; when the *Kshatriyas* had no respite from internecine warfare and the *Vaishyas* from money-making. In such an age the fruit of knowledge is as inaccessible as the date palm — whoever makes the long and difficult climb may get it, but if he falls it would be into pieces.

The path of knowledge as well as that of ritual *Karma* have both emphasized the other world more than this world. The path of knowledge terms this world as false and the *Karma* theory prescribes only *yajnas* as the path to heaven. It is not surprising therefore that a society which is always worrying about the other world, heaven and salvation, is crushed under the feet of foreigners. Again, it is not surprising if an indifference overtakes the people about who rules the country.

In this suffocating disorder the *Bhakti* wave was like a breath of fresh air. It is true the *Bhakti* movement did not produce the capacity in people to take up arms against foreigners and from this point of view it can even be called escapist. But its attraction and success lay in its accessibility and ability to unite people of different regions. The right to education may have been denied but the right to worshipping God was available to everybody. If the path of knowledge and *Karma* are like monarchy and oligarchy in politics, the *Bhakti* way is like democracy.

There is another reason for the popularity of the *Bhakti* movement. Discarding Sanskrit, the language of *Pandits*, Buddhism and Jainism succeeded in reaching the people through *Pali* and *Prakrit*. In the same way the *Bhakti* movement used the regional languages prevalent at that time as its vehicle to reach the people.

Despite the broad differences of climate, attire, eating habits and customs, there has been an age-long unity of reflection, thinking and experience among Indians. Therefore even with external differences, India's soul is one. The *Bhakti* movement produced such an extraordinary balance in our culture, literature and art that its stamp is apparent even today after 1000 years.

Knowledge is the way of the intellect but *Bhakti* is the way of the heart. *Vaishnav Acharyas* have gone so far as to reject the way of knowledge and *Karma* in favour of *Bhakti*.

## Uniqueness of Nanak

There is one clear difference between the other *Saints* of *Bhakti* movement and Nanak. All the saints and poets in different regions of India were advocates of God-incarnation. There were two very distinguished exceptions. They were Kabir and Nanak. Kabir in fact should be classified as a mystic poet than as a *Bhakta*. But Guru Nanak was basically a *Bhakta*, a poet also, but no votary of either God-incarnation or God-representative theory. Perhaps the reason was the Muslim domination in Punjab at that time.

Nanak was tired of the hypocrisy of those who believed in *Avatars* and the cruelty of those who followed the God-representative way. In spite of being a *Bhakta*, he did not sing the praise of Rama or Krishna. Instead he talked of the Formless, the Shapeless, the Timeless and the One without attributes as described in the *Vedas*. He replies to the *Avatar* advocates with the following words:

"Let us remember the One and only who forms the land and the sea; Why should we remember anybody who is subject to birth and death."

एकौ सिमरौ नानका जो जलथल रहा समाय ।  
दूजा काहे सिमरिये, जो जम्मे ते मर जाए ॥

When Guruji went to Jagannath Puri and saw the priests performing 'arti' of 'Thakurji', he told the priests:

"O priests, why do you perform arti of this limited form confined to a small area of the temple. Why don't you see the arti of the Formless which is going on in the universe and sing its praises?"

And he describes this arti in beautiful poetry:

"O Lord, this sky forms the basin in which the sun and the moon are two lamps and the star system is like pearls, the sandalwood breeze acts as the incense and the lord of wind as the fan-bearer. Fruits and flower-bearing forests are like the flame. O demolisher of fear, what an extraordinary arti is this! And the endless eternal sound is like the arti bugle.

"You have no eyes, but all the eyes of the world are yours. All the living creatures and the moving objects are forms shaped by you but you yourself have no form. You have no legs of your own but all the legs of the world are your creation. You have no nose but all the scents and smelling organs of the world are yours. This unique power of yours has astonished the whole world."

The Upanishads express similar thoughts, thus:

"The sun doesn't shine there, nor do the moon and stars; even lightning cannot enter there, what to talk of the fire of this world. When he shines everything is reflected in it. In fact this world is a reflection of his glory." (Kathopnishad)

A Veda mantra is also comparable. It says that God has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet. He is in the earth as well as covering it. Besides he is in space and also in the other worlds. (Yajurveda 31/1)

सहस्रशीर्षीः पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।

स भूमिं सर्वतः स्पृत्वाऽत्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलम् ॥

— यजुर्वेद ३१।१।

## The Challenge of Islam

By rejecting the Avatar concept and idol-worship, Nanak gave evidence of his far-sightedness. If he were to accept the Avatar concept, he would also have to give assent to the God-representative concept of Islam. This was not possible for Guru Nanak. The God which has no shape or Avatar, cannot even have a representative.

If he had rejected the several gods and goddesses of the Puranas,

it was also his resolve to familiarise the Hindus with the significance of monotheism so as to strengthen them ideologically against Islam. The followers of Islam have been denigrating Hindus with the argument that those who believe in more than one god, how can they face the worshippers of one *Allah*?

Sir Mohammad Iqbal himself hinted in one of his poems that the wave of monotheism spread throughout the world from India alone. Still Islam has staked its existence on the claim that it alone preached to the world the fact of One-God, *Allah*. Originally, the worship of One God was the gift of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, but in course of time the *Puranas* enmeshed it into all kinds of gods and goddesses and on this basis the western scholars have branded Hinduism as polytheistic.

When Guru Nanak preached about the Formless One of the *Vedas*, he gave notice to entire Islam that the quality you claim to be unique and yours was in fact our speciality, and for this purpose alone nobody need convert himself to Islam.

Another declared speciality of Islam is its creation of a casteless society. Seeing the Hindu society plagued with the deadly disease of casteism and untouchability, it was but right that Islam was proud of its social equality. If certain people driven away because of untouchability and craving for equal status were attracted by the equality slogan of Islam, the fault was not theirs but that of the entire Hindu society. Some people were denied access to temples and on the other hand in mosques, kings and commoners stood together to pray. It is a sight that would hearten anybody.

## No Opposition to Hinduism

Guru Nanak condemned untouchability and casteism only in order to remove this weakness of Hinduism. In his own words, he called himself a Hindu (*Janamsakhi*, page 102). According to *Janamsakhi*, he wore the sacred thread (*Yajnopavit*) and had a lock of hair (*choti*) on his head. After him till the fifth Guru, each had his sacred thread ceremony performed, were married according to Vedic rites, used to apply *tilak* and used to hear tales from *Vedas* and *Puranas*. There is even mention of *Vishnu* worship by Guru Arjun Dev. Guru Gobind Singh used to hear the *Bhagvata Purana* regularly. Guru Gobind Singh, in his *Vichitra Natak* has himself claimed link with Rama, Lava and Kusha and called himself a *Kshatriya* of *Sodhi* caste. Regarding Guru Nanak he says:

"The *Veda* adepts were called *Vedis*; those who had done noble deeds of *dharma*. In this class of *Vedis* was born Nanak Rai."

Thus, inspite of belonging to a Veda-studying family of Hindus, Guru Nanak never gave his support to the blot that was belief in high-low birth or to untouchability. In fact he gave special love and affection to sections of Hindu society considered lowly. The tradition of *Bhakti Kaal* is encapsuled in his saying:

“Nobody shall ask you your caste at the moment of reckoning;  
The Lord belongs to those who worship the Lord.”

Opposition to casteism and support to monotheism, these might well have been considered anti-Hindu by some traditional *Purana* followers. But these two qualities were necessary at that time to counter Islam and to protect Hinduism. That is why Guru Nanak's message started becoming more and more popular. His following went on increasing. His followers included Muslims also. Two persons — Bala and Mardana — were the closest to him. Bala was a jat by caste and Mardana was a Muslim. Attracted by this philosophy of equality of human beings, many became disciples of Guru Nanak and began to be called Sikhs, which is only a Punjabi word for the Sanskrit Shishya. These two words are not only synonymous but actually the same.

### **The Rise of Christian Powers**

If we look at the 15th century in a wider context, this was the time when the first contact of European Christian powers was established with India. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 and in 1498 the first European stepped on Indian soil. Columbus is credited with having discovered America. The gentleman had actually set out to discover India. The Europeans had heard stories of the fabulous wealth of India. So there was a race between them to find the sea route to India. The man who succeeded in doing this was Vasco de Gama of Portugal. He was the first European who on 22 May 1498 reached the Calicut port in the west coast of India.

The Portuguese came with a sword in one hand and the cross with Christ engraved in the other. When they found abundant gold in this land known as the *Bird of Gold*, with both hands they busied in gathering gold. So much did they lose themselves in this activity that their hold on the sword weakened. Thus the Dutch defeated them. When the Dutch also forgot all else in gathering gold, the French defeated them. When Napoleon's empire in Europe collapsed, their suzerainty elsewhere was also affected.

The first Englishman who came to India was Captain Hawkins. In 1608 he reached Surat port with a message for the Mughal emperor

from King James I. The 17th and 18th centuries tell stories of the struggle between these European powers to gain control over India and the success of the British in the end. But this fight among Europeans was confined to India's east, west and southern sea shores and nearby lands. The entire northern India and the country's huge central area remained untouched. The Mughal empire was at its peak at that time in this region.

### The Check on Conversions

The Islamic fire and Mughal empire did not find ready acceptance among Indians. At various places, Hindu powers started rising and challenging the Mughals.

In the time of Nanak, the Mughals had wreaked such havoc which is described in *Nanak Prakash*:

"Syed, Sheikh, Mughals, Pathans all had become very cruel and were torturing Hindus. They had temples demolished. *Sadhus* with attainments and able *pundits* were killed and their bodies thrown to vultures. Many were killed by driving nails in their bodies; many others were skinned and still others allowed to be bitten to death by dogs. Those who did not agree to conversion to Islam were tortured in several ways. *Yajna* and *havana* were forbidden and the defiant were made to regret. Beautiful women were abducted and forcibly kept in Muslim homes. The judges took bribe and converted truth into falsehood with their judgements."

In this atmosphere, when *Bhakta* poets were rousing the people of the country to a new basis of life, how could the land of the brave and of the ancient Aryans remain untouched. For centuries no saint had set foot there. India's ancient treasure of wisdom was now blurred with ignorance, superstitions and Mughal atrocities. The enlightenment that the land of Punjab had been thirsting for, was provided by the sayings of Nanak.

Guru Nanak's message had nothing new in it, but its speciality was that it was not mysterious; it did not have the intricacy of the *Shastras*. It was so simple and full of love that it won over the vile men of Punjab; conventions broke away, rituals and the fortifications of caste received a lightning blow. His own life was so simple, thoughts so pure, character so clean and behaviour so gentle that people were involuntarily attracted to him. He was not tied to any religious path, book or priest, and therefore spoke freely and non-controversially. He did not bow to anybody and spoke whatever he thought was true.

A direct result of this was a check on the spread of Islam in Punjab and Sind. People stopped becoming Muslims from fear or through allurements. Whether on the level of thought or in practical behavioural life, they did not need to submit to Islam. The soothing message of Guru Nanak even touched Muslims and they also felt proud in being called his disciples. The coming of Nanak was a like a wave of light in darkness.

सत गुरु नानक प्रकटिया,  
मिटी धुंद जग चानन होया ।  
ज्यों कर सूरज निकलिया,  
तारे छिपे अंधेरा पलिया ।

# 3

## The Birth of Khalsa



THE Baisakhi day (13 April) of 1699 is distinguished in Indian History.

But a year before this important event a four-month *Maha-yagna* was performed at Anandpur Sahib about which Gyani Gyan Singh has written in his *Panth Prakash*. In this the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is quoted as having said:

"The essence of our religion, practised by kings, *rishis* and *avatars*; it is this same religion that we wish to follow so that the entire creation may be happy. Firstly, there is a severe drought in the country, the rains have failed and secondly, there are epidemics in the country. Thirdly, men and women are forgetting their *dharma*. All are engaged in sinful activities and are therefore unfortunate. *Yagna* and *havana* are useful but the Turk rulers do not permit these. When we perform *yagna-havanas*, the skies will open up with rain, drought will disappear, crops will bring forth a variety of vegetation, the atmosphere will become purified and all diseases and despair will vanish. Illiteracy will go and valour will shine forth. People of all *Varnas* have today become cowards like sheep. That is why they are unable to face the powerful Turks. When the fragrance generated by the *yagna* reaches them, they will become courageous like lions. Bravery shall sink into their pores and they will become steadfast on their ancient *Arya dharma*. Their bodies shall become disease-free. They will be blessed with ever-pleasing victory and knowledge. Fearlessness and other divine qualities will show up in them. Then their children will also be blessed and ailments like smallpox will disappear. Devilish qualities like anger and desire tremble on seeing *yagnas* being performed. All the good qualities linked with truth and which have been described in the *Vedas*, come back into operation in

the world on methodically performing *yagna-havanas* (*Panth Prakash*, Niwas-25, page 201–202).

There is then description in verse of the Guru performing the *yagna* in *Anandpur Sahib* at the banks of *Sutlej*. The *yagna* was accomplished in *Naina Devi* and news about it spread throughout India.

The fruits of the *yagna* were described by the Guru himself:

"It began to rain abundantly, disease bearing agents disappeared. The nature of people also began to change. Flowers and trees were visible everywhere and juice from ripe fruit was blessing the earth. The influence of Turks began to wane and Hindus began to shine like stars, cows started giving milk in plenty and there were good crops and grass. Wise men started saying that the Guru had blessed the earth with this *yagna*. There was great joy in the land of *Bharat*. Evils started vanishing just as darkness is dispelled with the rise of the sun. The Guru's fame spread so much that people started coming to him from even foreign lands."

It can only be imagined how many people must have participated in this *yagna* lasting four months.

This holding of such a large scale *yagna* was not without reason. It was preparing the ground for the significant things the Guru proposed to do later.

Then came the *Baisakhi* day of 1699 which made history. On that eventful occasion a very large number of devotees had congregated in *Anandpur Sahib*. Had it been any other occasion, the congregation would have ended happily with the exchange of gifts, greetings and blessings. But this was a different occasion. It was a day ordained for immortality.

This was the day for which there had been preparations for 200 years. For this day, many gurus had laid down their lives. For this day there had been *yagna* for four long months.

What was the purpose of it all?

There had been nine Gurus before *Guru Gobind Singh* came on the stage. His own father, *Guru Teg Bahadur*, had sacrificed his life on November 11, 1675.

The Guru gave his head but not faith in his religion. A wave of new awareness swept the entire Hindu society. But how many were willing to court death for the sake of their culture and religion? *Guru Gobind Singh* wanted to prepare society for that path of sacrifice.

He had been on that illustrious seat for 23 years. His face now shone with new youthfulness.

Rising early, Guruji had his bath and then meditated. Then he donned new clothes and arms and appeared before the congregation. On seeing the tenth Guru, the people began to remember his father Teg Bahadur's sacrifices.

That day it seemed that Goddess of Learning, Saraswati herself was speaking through the voice of the Guru. Every word had years of reflection behind it. The Guru had bared his heart before the congregation and the people were spellbound.

Suddenly the Guru took out his sword from the scabbard. Waving it in the air, he held it above his head and declared:

"The Goddess of War is thirsty—Is there any man ready to sacrifice his head to save his religion?"

The congregation was stunned. There was no reply.

The Guru again thundered:

"Is there any worthy son who will give his head to save his religion?"

Only silence greeted him. There was no dearth of people calling themselves religious. But on this occasion they were all tongue tied. Many started leaving. Anybody else in this situation might have given way to despair. But the tenth Guru was no ordinary man. He was made of sterner stuff. He was the servant of God and he remembered the sacrifices of the previous Gurus.

One or two blows do not shape arms out of iron. One has to keep hammering till the clear look of the weapon begins to emerge.

There was one more cry:

"Is there no worthy son who will give his head to save religion?"

An age-old numbness broke down. Iron began to take the shape of weapon. The entire congregation watched with unbelieving eyes that a man stood there with folded hands saying that his head was available for sacrifice.

He was Dayaram Khatri of Lahore.

Guruji took Dayaram by the hand and led him into a nearby tent. After some time when he came out his sword was red with fresh blood. The congregation was dazed.

The Guru again waved his sword in the air and roared,

"Is there a religious man . . ."

Some people could not digest this. They went to Guru's wife, Mata Jeeto, and complained that some madness had taken hold of the Guru. But Mata knew the Guru's nature only too well. She remained silent.

Disheartened, they returned to the meeting and saw that Dharamdass Jat of Hastinapur was standing there and praying to the

Guru with folded hands that his head also may be made use of for sacrifice.

Guruji took him also to the tent and emerged; his sword smeared with fresh blood.

Before the people could break the silence, the Guru again called,

"Is there a religious man . . ."

This time the man who stood up to offer his head was Muhakam Chand *Dhobi* (washerman) of Dwarika Puri. Guruji took him also to the tent.

Guruji again roared like a lion,

"Is there a religious man..."

In reply to this call the man who came forth was called Himmat, a *Dheevār* (fisherman) by caste. *Himmat* means courage.

The Guru's enthusiasm remained undiminished. He let out again a similar cry.

This time the man who stood up in reply to the Guru's call was Sahib Chand, barber of Beedar. Guruji took him also in the tent and he met the same fate as was the share of the earlier four.

But this time when Guruji came out of the tent he was not alone. He was accompanied by the five men in new clothes who had offered their heads at the Guru's call.

The congregation went delirious with joy.

Guruji named those five brave ones as *Panj Piaras* (the five most dear to the Guru). These five were honoured as the first *Khalsa* (the pure ones) and were asked to partake of *Amrit*.

Sutlej-water was placed in an iron pan. Guruji cut the water with his double-edged sword. The Guru's wife then sweetened it with sugar balls. Thereafter Guruji read from five scriptures. These were *Jupji Sahib*, *Jaap Sahib*, *Dash Savaiye*, *Chaupai* and *Anand Sahib*.

By taking ordinary river water in the iron Pan, Guruji showed in a way that man's soul is also endless like the river. Then by cutting the water with his sword he showed that just as water mingles again after being cut and no difference remains between the parts, in the same way it is wrong to differentiate between souls. By reciting the scriptures he showed that such spiritual sayings purify the soul. Mata Jeeto (Guru's wife) by mixing sugar balls in the water indicated to the followers that sweetness should enter their hearts, words and deeds. The shastras say: *Vidyaya amritam ashnute*, i.e. nectar can be had only through knowledge. This understanding converted the river water into *Amrit*.

Guruji gave this *Amrit* first to the newly ordained *Panj Piaras*. If the *Panj Piaras* felt blessed after drinking this, the congregation felt bles-

sed by merely watching this extraordinary scene.

Guruji now performed another miracle.

Through this incident he showed that the Sikhs (*Shishyas*, followers) who on Guru's order were ready to have their heads severed and whose strong belief in the immortality of the soul had made them fearless; these Sikhs had the right to partake of *Amrit* even before the Guru. The Guru now sat humbly before the very Sikhs whom he had ordained and given *Amrit* to. Becoming a Sikh (*Shishya*) of the Sikhs (*Shishyas*) he prayed to them to honour him with *Amrit*.

This was an honour for the Sikhs. It doubled their faith in and devotion to their Guru. With great love they made him partake of *Amrit*.

On that day Guru Gobind Rai's name was changed to Guru Gobind Singh. This was a singular event in the history of the world. While the Guru laid the foundation of *Khalsa* and Sikh-dharma (*Shishya* duties) and pointed the way to immortality through his guidance, he also preached to them simplicity and courageousness through the example of the iron pan. He also decreed five essentials for a Sikh (the five *Kakars* i.e. *Ks*): *Kachcha*, *Kara*, *Kirpan*, *Kangi*, *Kesh*. (Briefs, iron bangle, sword, comb and hair).

Sikh scholars have tried to read deep meaning into this decree but even with common sense one can understand that this was done to distinguish the *Khalsa* (pure) from others. This soldierly outfit was recommended to remove the caste-led degeneration of society and to instil into it elements of bravery. *Khalsa* means the pure. When the motherland was being crushed under the feet of foreign invaders then what could be more pure or noble than to fight to defend it? In fact *Khalsa* has the same meaning as *Arya* of ancient Vedic literature. From the point of view of meaning, the words *Khalsa* and *Arya* are synonymous.

The word *Arya* does not denote a caste, community or a race, but it is qualitative and means a person of noble conduct. *Khalsa* also means a person whose thoughts and conduct are pure. It will be incorrect to link it with any caste or community. In *Panth Prakash* Guruji says: (prose translation):

"You have been born in the clan of Gurus. Forget your previous caste consciousness. People belonging to all four castes are brothers and have now attained the quality of *Khalsa*."

For what *dharma* did he call the congregations, and what did he mean by that *dharma*? This too he makes clear himself:

"Now that you are my Sikh today, you have to sacrifice your head for *dharma*."

It was the very same *Arya dharma* for whose defence Guruji had summoned the meeting and explaining the same *dharma*, he said:

“Let the *Khalsa Panth* (religion of the pure) reverberate in the entire world, and the Hindu *dharma* awaken in every nook and corner.”

This makes it clear that he evolved the panth for the defence of Hindu *dharma*. He had no intention to start a separate religion or sect. In *Vichitra Natak* he writes:

“By starting new sects and divisions, some clever men have done no service to anybody. I have come to this world only to protect *dharma* and to destroy the evildoers.”

Praying before Goddess Durga, he says,

“O Mother of this world! I shall destroy even the sign of evil-doers so that only *Dharma's* tale is told in this world. I shall quickly destroy the evil rulers. Then you watch the magic of this servant of yours.

Then he says:

“I shall restore the honour of *Veda dharma* in the world and shall wipe out the crime of cow killing.”

He writes with pain in *Kali Avtar*:

“There have sprung up sects in the country which do not honour the *Vedas* but spread disparate teachings.”

It is notable that when Guruji issued his call for a sacrifice for the sake of religion, the response came not from his so-called followers, but from five Hindus, to whom the *Guru* accorded the highest place in Sikh history as the *Panj Piaras*. These five may have been lowly from the point of view of the caste-proud, but by giving them *Amrit* Guruji made them more respected than even the highest caste. Guruji had come to unite all four castes and to take the Hindu race away from cowardice and to fill it with feelings of courage. That is why on that immortal *Baisakhi* day he adopted a novel psychological way.

# 4

## The Hunger for Power

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MAN is a social animal. But this 'animal' comes to dominate his humanity as and when it likes.

Every person is an individual unit in himself. Simultaneously he is an inseparable part of the tens (society) and hundreds (nation). In some way or other he is joined to others in environment. Man has to accept this situation in order to prove his existence, to earn for himself and to give meaning to his survival instinct. Man has always suffered from this primitive hunger.

Since early times man has been trying to evolve a formula to satisfy this primitive hunger which can be broadly described as desire for self-expression or establishing authority. The main aim behind all human knowledge — whether in the field of spiritual thought, social reform or scientific research — has been satisfying this ancient hunger. All movements of spiritual regeneration or self-inquiry that have taken place in the world have resulted from this age-old hunger. To satisfy this hunger, when man adopts socially prescribed and culturally proved means and if he succeeds, he is given the honour of a historical figure and elevated to divine status. Otherwise, animal instincts remain dominant in him. Ravana and Duryodhana were not inferior in valour. They lost their lives bravely fighting in the battlefield. But in history they are recipients of as much infamy as the fame and honour accorded to Rama and Arjuna. The reason is that this crude primitive hunger is a sign of bestiality. Thoughtful man has converted this very hunger into various refined forms.

Like every progressive society, the Sikh community was not untouched by this age-old hunger. To strengthen their egos, on the one hand they set foot on the path of spirituality and on the other took to the sword, in order to dominate in the material world as well. By following the way of renunciation and sacrifice they were not doing anything new. Exactly the same thing was being accomplished in distant Maharashtra by Chatrapati Shivaji with the blessings of the

capable Guru Ramdas. This traditional link between *dharma* and politics has been handed down as a legacy to the coming generations.

The Sikhs can give several examples of this long nurtured hunger but the means they adopted to satisfy it would be questioned by every affected person. Watching the drama of the last three to four years that the Sikh mentality has unfolded — communalism, religious intolerance, fanaticism, bestiality and terrorism in a democratic and secular country — the inevitable question on the lips of an average person is: Will these violent ways promote religion or animalism?

Love and enmity cannot be mates just as nectar and poison cannot remain together. Religion and arms are absolutely disparate in character. The outcome of both is also dissimilar.

Had religion and arms been complementary, Ashoka would not have given up arms after conquering Kalinga. The League of Nations and the United Nations Organisation would not have come into being after the two World Wars. But in adverse circumstances we usually lose balance and patience and take decisions which keep harming generations to come. When such decisions are taken in the name of the creed, the results are more serious and even dangerous.

The message of Nanak was so noble and simple that the people accepted it willingly; not from fear of arms. But many could not join the army of Guru Gobind Singh with the same enthusiasm. The reason was that Nanak's teachings were purely spiritual and religious, whereas there were political motives behind the birth of *Khalsa*. Guru Gobind's popular slogan was *Raj Karega Khalsa, aaki rahe na koye* (only the pure will rule, none else). As long as there was able leadership, this slogan did not harm Hindu-Sikh unity. There was even a tradition in Hindu homes to make their eldest son a Sikh. But in the hands of incompetent and narrow-minded leadership, even a corrupt Sikh was *Khalsa* and a noble Muslim was *Aaki*.

Guru Gobind Singh cannot be blamed for this destructive interpretation. In fact he had been repeating that Guru Teg Bahadur had sacrificed his life for the sake of Hindu religion. His respect for Hindu scriptures and traditions still offends the communal Sikhs. The 'five Ks' that Guru Gobind gave to his army were similar to the ones that King Nala's father-in-law gave to his soldiers. But these were never considered to be symbols of religion. These were a kind of military uniform.

Guru Nanak's religion is basically against external religious symbols. He did not give significance even to Hindu *choti* (tuft of hair) or the sacred thread. He did not consider ritual prayer, gong and bell soundings or *shradh* a part of religion. Before such pure spirituality, a

temporary significance of the five Ks' can be appreciated but to turn these into permanent symbols of identity would be an affront to Nanak. In due course this illusion of identity symbols created such fissures between Hindus and Sikhs that today hardly any Punjabi Hindu family would think of converting its first born into a Sikh.

If the situation had not been so bad the walls of Durgyana Mandir would not have grown taller in competition with the Golden Temple. After the 5 June army operation the face of Sikhism that was unmasked has presented two alternatives to the community. To follow either of the two poles of Sikhism — Nanak or Gobind — or they would have to evolve an acceptable synthesis of the two and prove its efficacy by their conduct.

There is no dearth among Sikhs of far-sighted intellectuals who seek the well-being of all and who can impartially assess the harm done by the storm of *Akali* movement and Bhindranwale's terrorism. These people can properly guide the Sikhs. Whatever happened in Golden Temple on that unfortunate night of death did bring relief to Punjab and neighbouring States but it has also been considered extremely unseemly and unpleasant. The discerning treat it not as victory but defeat; just as Yudhishtira thought after the Mahabharata war victory and Ashoka after conquering Kalinga.

It is not easy to appreciate how a purely humane religion slipped into the hands of people who for their own selfish ends went on playing a game of hatred, enmity and cruelty and gave it the appellation of valour and heroism. Such reasoning may have some value in politics but none in religion or spiritualism.

Confidence in arms rises only after faith in religion weakens; when the founts of love, amity and tolerance dry up. Then primitive animalism raises its head and to justify it all kinds of excuses are thought of. History shows that more than politics, it is religious fanaticism which has drawn more human blood.

Incarnations like Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Dayanand, Ramakrishna, Christ, Socrates, Mansoor and Sarmad have all taught that the guarantee for a peaceful and secure life is not arms and weapons but our morality and righteousness for whose development faith in God and religion are only disciplines.

But the leaders, restless with the primitive hunger, rouse religious feelings of ordinary people only to mislead them. The ordinary Sikh does not perceive the paradox that has seized his community today. He is unable to distinguish between Guru Nanak's Sikh *dharma* and Guru Gobind's *Khalsa* creed. In the background of the terrorism indulged in by the followers of Anandpur Sahib, if Nanak and Gobind

were brought face to face, they would be unable to recognise each other.

The faithful might consider this an interference in Sikh affairs. But it is necessary they prove the verity of *Aaki rahe na koye* by not allowing gurdwaras to become shelters of anti-social elements or centres of regional politics or dens of smuggling and debauchery. They must also give up the illusion of *Raj Karega Khalsa*. Because this very slogan is responsible for the pitiable state of gurdwaras and the humiliation of Harmandir Sahib. Let *Akali Dal* indulge in politics if it wants to, but it should be stopped from interfering in the activities of Sikh *panth* and from misusing gurdwara money for political purposes. Or if it wants to have a say in religious activities, let it withdraw from politics.

The Sikhs themselves may not be interested in distinguishing between Sikh *dharma* and *Khalsa panth* but to non-Sikhs this difference has become clear. The cry of *Raj Karega Khalsa* first sowed doubts in the minds of Muslims, then in the British empire and now among Hindus. A true religion rules over the hearts of people and does not aim at seizing power. The prophets, messengers of God and other great men had the rulers bowing to them. Christ, Mansoor or Sarmad never saluted kings nor ever took recourse to the sword. Have the Sikhs forgotten so soon that Babar had touched the feet of Nanak and put the dust of his feet on his forehead, that Ashoka laid down his sword before an image of Buddha, that Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur's sacrifice had punctured the prestige of Mughal empire, that Banda Bairagi's evidence had shaken the pride of Farrukhsier. What swords cannot accomplish in a hundred years is brought about by great souls in their lifetime itself. If there has to be a future for Sikhism in India, it is through these noble traditions and not through terrorism.

It is not necessary to repeat that of the 10 Sikh gurus only Gobind Singh had long hair, and even he did not issue any edict that in future only the long-haired would be called Sikhs. Then why is it that in the SGPC there is not a single Sikh with normal hair? There is not a single normal-haired *granthi* (priest) in the gurdwaras, not even for appearances sake. For the purposes of census and conscription in the Army, when the British defined Sikhs as those keeping long hair, why was this definition not opposed and criticized? A Sikh with normal hair is not considered a Sikh at all!

### **The Panth in Chains**

Blinded by selfishness, the long-haired do not realise that due to this narrow approach Sikhism has shrunk from the land of Punjab to

the boundaries of gurdwaras. In fact this situation too is confined to the Jat Sikhs of Majha, Doaba and Malwa. That night of death exposed how cruelly the fortifications in gurdwaras had torn to shreds the peaceful *dharma* of Nanak. Without doubt the Jat Sikhs have played a leading role in this. Thus, their hold on gurdwaras will grow stronger and the entry to gurdwaras of *Sahajdhari*s (normal haired Sikhs) *Namdharis*, *Udasi*'s and non-Jat Sikhs will be curbed.

If sword is the answer to all problems then where is the need for religion? What can be more anomalous than the lack of faith in spiritual forces displayed by Sant Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh, Major General Shabeg Singh, Major General Mohinder Singh, Major General Bhuller, Major General Narendra Singh and Brigadier J.S. Dhillon? They created a situation in Punjab where one cannot but come to the conclusion that Nanak's message of peace is now only a matter for history.

### **An Imaginary Fear**

The claim of Sikhs that keeping arms is their religious right is basically wrong. If the rest of the society feels safe without arms, then what fear is devouring the Sikhs? And then arms are no guarantee of security. Have the Sikhs never been defeated by Muslims, Jats, Rajputs, Marathas, the eastern UP bhaiyyas and the British? If they had so much confidence in their arms, how did they allow Ahmedshah Abdali and Nadirshah to penetrate Punjab and reach Delhi? Why did fully armed Guru Gobind Singh leave Punjab in despair? And in 1947 why did they leave Nankana Sahib and other gurdwaras to the Muslim Government of Pakistan?

The conditions of Guru Gobind Singh's times have all changed but still the right to keep arms is advocated. Can a six-inch or a yard long sword fight a pistol? Then why this insistence on keeping only the sword?

Under the secular Constitution of this country orthodox Hindus, Arya Samajis, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims live fearlessly and each has his identity. If they are all free to pursue their religious customs, then why is this fear being spread among Sikhs, specially *Akalis*, that they are leading a servile life in India. In fact they cannot forget the short stint of power they enjoyed. Sikh political aspirations span the time of Guru Arjun Dev to Guru Gobind Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave concrete shape to these aspirations by instituting *Khalsa Raj*. That broken dream is still being nurtured by *Akalis*. Power does intoxicate. But the *Akalis* must not forget they are not alone in having enjoyed power after great sacrifices. At some time or the other

power in India was being enjoyed by Rajputs, Gurjars, Dogras, Marathas, Jats, Ahirs and hundreds of such other races which are now lost in history, are in minorities or have lost their ancient glory.

At the time of independence too there were more than 500 States and some of the 'martial races' gave up the illusion of power in order to provide a strong basis for a united India. What is the difficulty with the Akalis in joining the mainstream? In the last 38 years of independence neither the Indian Government nor any other race or community can be accused of having taken any step that could have harmed the religious freedom of the Akalis. The charge of injustice against Sikhs that is now polluting the air of Punjab is nothing but a political stunt of the Akalis and an international conspiracy of foreign agents. What a mockery it is that the Akalis imagine they are victims of exploitation and injustice in Punjab when the nationalist Sikhs, Udasis, Nirankaris, Namdharis and normal-haired Sikhs have never complained of such exploitation, injustice and insecurity.

### Three Facts of Extremism

Shall the nation conclude that those playing with fire in Punjab have neither faith in God nor belief in Panth; that they understand neither humanity nor nationalism? If we see the Akali agitation and terrorism in correct perspective, it would be obvious that both their leaders are of the same ilk and have similar aims. The second fact that comes to light is that they have been influenced and encouraged by foreign powers. The third fact is that they are among those 20 per cent in Punjab who are the most prosperous. This aristocratic section of Punjab is the Jat Sikhs who are farmers, businessmen, industrialists and politicians too. Those settled abroad among them have established contacts with foreign powers and keep supplying funds and arms in India through smugglers. Under the cover of religion, this section of 20 per cent tries to mislead the remaining 80 per cent Sikh population in order to retain its authority and control. Most of the facilities provided to Punjab are being enjoyed by this section. In Government and administration too they have a big say. As long as the 80 per cent exploited people do not fight this dominance of the 20 per cent Punjab will continue to burn.

A summary of Bhinderanwale's speeches is provided in the White Paper. He says that the Sikhs should realise they are leading a life of slavery under the Hindu government of India and therefore to break the shackles of slavery they have to take to arms. Reminding the Sikhs of their traditional valour he tells them:

"if we divide the 66 crore population, each Sikh gets only 35 Hindus in his share, not even 36. Then how do you say you are weak?"

These are the words of a man who was called a *Sant* before death and a martyr after.

Similar words were used by a Satanic man called Farrukhsier. When that savage bigot placed rewards on the heads of Sikhs and when he got the brave Banda Bairagi, his son and friends murdered he considered himself an humble servant of God and a candidate for heaven.

This is not the story of Farrukhsier alone but of every such bigoted leadership which resorts to violence in order to maintain its dominance in the name of religion. When Bhindranwale used to pronounce his sentence against some opponent, then such a man was murdered with great barbarity. The merciless killing of a Sikh woman involved in the revenge murder of Sodhi is a heart rending tale because this very woman's modesty was outraged by Bhindranwale's terrorists. It is suspected that many such hair-raising and shameful episodes have deliberately been left out in the White Paper for fear of insult to Sikh religion and gurdwaras.

An argument is being spread that only a separate Sikh State can protect the culture and traditions of Sikhs. But if a Sikh *dharma* can be born in bonded India, why can't it prosper in free India? They never asked for Khalistan from British-ruled India. Compared to Muslim India and British India, the Sikh of independent India is in a much better condition, is recipient of higher honours. Then why this cry of Khalistan again and again? Why?

In the hands of *Akali* leadership, Khalistan has become a favourite threat on whose strength whenever they liked they could incite a Sikh rebellion. The *Akalis* have often used this weapon to win proper or improper demands and fearing a break-up, the Government has always allowed itself to be blackmailed.

Some people with nationalistic feeling's tired of the dirty game of *Akalis*, went and joined the Congress. Notable among those leaving the *Akalis* were Giani Kartar Singh, Hukam Singh, Gian Singh Rarewala, Lacchman Singh Gill, Gurnam Singh, Harcharan Singh Hudiyara, Prem Singh Lalpura, Mangal Singh, Baba Kharak Singh, Amar Singh Jhaval, Sardul Singh Kavishwar, Hira Singh Dard, Giani Sher Singh, Sarmukh Singh Jhaval (former president of Akali Dal), Baba Gurdit Singh (of Kamagata Maru fame), Sajjan Singh, Kapur Singh and Giani Zail Singh (President of India).

But the nationalist Sikhs did not have significant effect on the Sikh

population of Punjab. The reason was that they enjoyed only comforts and facilities; they did not have a deep understanding of the ordinary Sikhs. They made no efforts to see the gurdwaras stopped funding the *Akalis* nor did they try to ensure that politics and religion were kept apart. The result of this negligence was that seized by the *Akali* mentality, the primitive hunger of Sikhs went on increasing.

### **The Bubble Pricked**

The *Akali* leadership has been trying to prove that it has a strong hold on the people, but the truth is exactly the opposite. *Akali Dal* has always been plagued by discord and once it was divided into four groups. From the role of *Akalis* in the present agitation it is apparent that they were completely in the hands of the SGPC and the terrorists. They did not have the courage to open their mouth against the anti-national activities of the terrorists or the increasing immorality in the gurdwaras. They used to come to the negotiating table as representatives of Punjab but could not accept any solution for fear of the terrorists.

This so-called representative party of Punjab has never been able to provide a purely *Akali* government to that State. After 1947 the Dal joined the Congress twice — in 1948 and 1956. Both fought the elections together in 1957. In 1962 it co-operated with Jan Sangh, the socialist parties, the Communist party and the Republicans. In 1967 it formed the government with the help of Communists and Jan Sangh. In 1977 they aligned with the Janata Party and then with the Lok Dal. Even after aligning with these parties the *Akalis* could not adopt a nationalist view-point; all the time they behaved like posters on gurdwaras. They can co-operate with anyone only to the extent it fulfils their selfish purpose.

Actually the entire politics of the country has been reduced to narrow group interests, but unlike the *Akalis* no group has ever worked against or raised its voice against national interests. In Kashmir and Tamil Nadu also religious and lingual feelings get roused at the time of elections or at the fall of a government, but these have never taken the form of a massive violent agitation or a mission. The little success that the *Akalis* have achieved in Punjab is due to the 20 per cent Jat Sikhs who are united, prosperous and dominate over the rest of society and readily respond to the calls for agitation. Since the terrorists also belonged to this section, the *Akali Dal* was under their pressure and could not come to any settlement with the government.

What image the *Akalis* have in Punjab is revealed in the book "A

History of Shiromani Akali Dal" written by Harjinder Singh Dilgir. He says:

"Some of the Akali leaders I met in order to ascertain few historical facts came out with statements like "why write a history of these traitors? Many felt a sense of shame in talking about Akali Dal. Some gentlemen did provide assistance but these people were mild Akalis."

The failure in the beginning did not deter Dilgir Singh nor did he try to find out why there were such feelings against the Akalis. After having written the book he claimed that he did not lose any opportunity to criticise Congressmen, nationalist Sikhs and Arya Samajis. At many places he overlooked certain facts that went against the Akalis or which gave proof of communal amity. Referring to Sikh troops and Dogra generals, he quotes Cunningham as saying,:

"the Generals of this Army of lions were donkeys."

And then adds:

"To me the description of Sardar Kapur Singh seems closer to truth that in the 20th century the Khalsa is repeating the same old dramas! And if this is not stopped then only the Lord can save us" (Shiromani Akali Dal, page 41)



THE seed that sprouted during the time of Guru Gobind Singh was sown actually by Nanak, and his successors watered it. This conclusion of Dr Gokul Chand Narang is not the complete truth but only a partial expression of it. There is no doubt that Nanak gave the vision to fight injustice, exploitation and superstition to Punjab which had been shattered by Muslim oppression and Hindu hypocrisy. But it does not mean this vision had to culminate in taking up arms.

Nanak was an attained soul at a very early age. Remaining above casteism, opinions and worldly rules this divine soul opened the blocked streams of wisdom for the ordinary people. He wrote no autobiography, still his life was carved on the psyche of the people. He authored no book, still his thought destroyed like lightning the darkness of superstition and hypocrisy. He did not set up any group of followers, but of their own people started becoming his disciples. He did not build any temple, but it was in their homes that the people worshipped him. He never held a sword, still emperors like Babar felt blessed on kissing the dust of his feet.

Guru Govind Singh established the *Khalsa* and gave a sword in his hands and that *Khalsa* gave unparalleled instances of valour and sacrifice. But such instances are shown by those brave souls also who did not fight in religious frenzy. A peaceful religion finds strength not in such bravery but in the sacrifice of great souls like Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur. If the way shown by Arjun Dev and Teg Bahadur had been followed, then Sikh religion would have acquired a different form. Then world famous historian Arnold Toynbee would not have written in his book ('A Study of History', seventh volume, page 414):

"By use of force, the Sikhs have presented a strange example of self-stultification in Hindu history".

Actually the Sikh tendency of using violence and counter-violence

to establish Sikh creed is inspired by Muslim history and traditions. In Hinduism also in exceptional cases, arms were taken up to protect religion but never did a religious pioneer try to pick up arms himself. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar writes in this context:

“The speciality of Hindu culture right from Vedic times to Mahatma Gandhi has been its love of non-violence. In fact true coordination between cultures is not possible without non-violence. We can defeat man with sword, we cannot win him over. Winning over a man is actually conquering his heart and the way of the heart is not the red earth of the battlefield but the cool land of tolerance and the shining sea of generosity” (‘Sanskriti Ke Chaar Adhyaya’, page 9).

After the death of Nanak his followers put his creedless spirituality on a path where there was desire for worldly prosperity and political ambitions. On this path, doubtless, his followers acted in public interest, displayed sentiments of sacrificing their all and presented examples of great bravery. But in a spirit of revenge, the sounding of war bugles and clashing of arms they forgot the pure spiritualism of Nanak and dragged it into a sectarian creed. Certainly this was a great tragedy for Sikh religion.

## No Hereditary Succession

Guru Nanak attained to a long life of 70 years and spent his last years in Kartarpur where lovers of spirituality used to gather to hear his sublime address. He did not appoint his son his successor but entrusted a faithful disciple (later called Guru Angad) the responsibility of spreading spirituality. This work could have been done by any one of his sons, as one of his sons Shrichand showed by establishing *Udasi* ideology. Nanak did not adopt hereditary succession as he did not want to tie down God's immortal voice in narrow *panth*. The founder of Islam, Mohammad, had tried such an experiment but its ill effects were obvious. Nanak could not have repeated such a mistake. But after his death, his view point was abandoned almost mercilessly.

Guru Angad is famous for three things: 1) Invention of Gurmukhi, 2) Collection of Guru Nanak's teachings, and 3) Development of *langar* (free kitchen). The reason, according to Dr Gokul Chand Narang, was that the successors had started feeling that Guru Nanak's mission should take on a different shape, his followers should have an independent identity and not lose themselves in Hindu society. The efforts of Guru Angad produced a brotherhood of like-thinking people and although no hint of separatism was visible, its seeds had certainly been sown.

The third Guru Amardas is famous for having ably countered the claims of Shrichand's *Udasi* followers that only the Guru's son can be his successor. The second significant thing he did was to effectively propagate the religion, he divided the area into 22 parts (called *Manjas*) and put them under able disciples. In 1546 he set up a city called Goindwal which was given so much prominence that it became the major pilgrimage centre for the Sikhs. He also increased the fame of Guru Nanak's Kartarpur. Even the foundation of Amritsar was laid by him and the fourth Guru set up his HQ there. He made hundreds of hill chieftains into his disciples whose donations were used to run *langars*. Noticing the spiritual influence of Guru Amardas in the conquest of Chittor, Mughal King Akbar came to meet him. Fourth Guru Ramdas also had good relations with Akbar. At the instance of the Guru, Akbar waived the land revenue on Majha and Malwa farmers who were in great financial difficulties.

There was a great departure at the time of Ramdas. In deference to the wishes of his daughter Bhani, he passed on the succession to his son-in-law's family. The hereditary succession that Guru Nanak had scrupulously avoided was given respectability by Guru Ramdas. In the words of Dr Gokul Chand Narang the Guru Sahib now became the living symbol of spiritual, worldly and political power. From Guru Sahib he became '*Sacche Padshahi*' (the true King). Due to the increasing popularity of the *langar* system, the poor started adopting Sikhism in which there were no caste differences. Owing to good relations with Akbar, the influence of the Guru spread among Nawabs, landlords and in the area of administration. The system of hereditary succession put the spotlight on one family.

### Political Ambitions

By the time of the fifth Guru Arjun Dev, the Sikhs had established their separate identity. The legacy of Panthic prosperity gave rise to political ambitions in Guru Arjun Dev. But before expressing these he wanted to strengthen his organisation. His first step was the editing of the *Adi Granth*. Till that time the Sikhs had as scripture only the *Janam Sakhi* which was based on the accounts of Bala. Guru Arjun Dev wanted to produce such a book which would be the *Vedas*, the Bible or the Quran for the Sikhs and whose devotees could be organised into a power. So he compiled the sayings of his four predecessors, his own and that of some selected saints and also included some songs by poets in praise of the Gurus.

Now he thought of making a 'Mecca' for Sikhs. To give this importance to Amritsar he tried to turn the Sarovar into a Ganga. By

constructing a *Harmandir* (house of the lord) in the centre of the *Sarovar* he put the stamp of its piety and splendour on the minds of his followers. It is interesting to note what he got constructed was '*Harmandir*' and not *gurdwara*. In his eyes there was no difference between the two. He not only set up his seat in this town, but according to Panth Prakash, encouraged leaders of Sikh society to settle there.

There was no clear religious reason behind making Amritsar such a centre. This was a result of Guru Arjun Dev's political ambitions and can be understood by studying the geographical and the administrative situation at that time. North of Chenab was dominated by Muslim farmers and the area between Chenab and Ravi was Hindu-Muslim joint influence area. Because of the proximity of Lahore there was more governmental presence in the area between the two rivers. From the political point of view this was not favourable to him, therefore he set his eyes on the Hindu majority Bari-Doab area. This area was well known to Guru Sahib and was almost untouched by the influence of Muslim officials. Amritsar lay in this area and later events also proved that from the political point of view, Guru Arjun Dev's assessment was correct. Guru Gobind Singh received the maximum number of soldiers from this area. He set up Taran Taran town in the area known as Majha. Lakes were constructed in the towns of Goindwal, Taran Taran and Amritsar and inns and langars were also opened making it a great attraction for the people.

### **Royal Splendour**

The next step of Guru Arjun Dev was to replenish his treasury. He fixed the amount of contributions to be made by the donators according to their wishes. After ensuring orderly managements of 22 *Manjas* he ordered that on every Baisakhi day the donations collected by these *Manjas* would be accepted. The trustworthy manager of these *Manjas* were called *Masand* and the title was equivalent to that of Mughal Governors. Later this position was also made hereditary. He started the custom of buying horses from Turkey and selling them as a result of which more cash flowed into the Amritsar treasury and in good time the *Khalsa* Army developed good horsemen. Thus the *Panth* had acquired the form of a government.

Guru Arjun Dev also started living like a king. Although there was no dearth of simplicity and politeness in him, his court had become a

centre of great splendour. Two events in the life of Guru Arjun Dev turned his splendour an eyesore for the Mughal court. This in the end resulted in his martyrdom also. For one he gave massive financial and moral support to Delhi's rebel prince Khusro and secondly he rudely turned down the hand of Lahore's Dewan Chandu Shah's daughter for his son. When the news about incitement to the rebel prince for civil war reached the Mughal court, orders were issued for the arrest of the Guru.

Guru Arjun Dev was fined Rs 2 lakh for assisting the rebel prince and was also asked to remove those lines from *Granth Saheb* which were even slightly offensive to Islam. On his refusal he was tortured by being put on burning sand. He was made to sit on a large red hot iron pan and hot water was poured on him. In the end he came out of the prison on the pretext of having a bath in the Ravi and is said to have given up his life in water.

Guru Arjun Dev's Martyrdom gave new strength to the Sikh view that "Dharma's foundation is the blood of martyrs". The Guru's martyrdom encouraged the Sikhs to look up to the political horizon.

The sixth Guru Hargobind was the son of Guru Arjun Dev. Finding exceptional qualities in him, in 1607 emperor Jehangir took him along with him to Kashmir. But soon he was accused of contravening jungle laws, misusing government funds and failure to pay the fine imposed on his father and was relieved of his administrative duties. For years he was kept starving in Gwalior fort. He was ultimately freed at the intercession of Muslim Saint Miyan Meer.

Hargobind was a good horseman and a valiant fighter. He gave evidence of his prowess in clashes with Muslim chieftains. But after the excesses of the Mughal court, he came to the conclusion that it was not worthwhile to mix religion with politics.

The seventh Guru Har Rai was the grandson of Guru Hargobind. As a peace-loving person he was almost untouched by the fighting instinct. But like Guru Arjun Dev he made a mistake. In 1685, he sent a few troops to obstruct Aurangzeb's men who were chasing Dara Shikoh. Helping Dara was a good cause because he was a noble person compared to Aurangzeb. He had been influenced by Hindu philosophy and being the eldest had a rightful claim to the throne. But a fanatic like Aurangzeb could not tolerate it. After ascending the throne he summoned Har Rai to Delhi. But instead of going himself he sent his son Ram Rai who was taken into custody. After this episode Har Rai's son Harkishan became the Guru but soon died of small pox. Har Rai's brother Teg Bahadur then became the Guru.

## Great Sacrifice

Ninth Guru Teg Bahadur had no soldierly interests. There is no evidence to suggest that he ever harboured political ambitions. With his personality, knowledge and exemplary conduct he was able to spread Sikh religion extensively. The speed with which he popularised this religion during 1664–1675, shattered the dream of Aurangzeb of converting the entire Punjab into Islam. Aurangzeb also discovered that the Gurudom was getting excellent soldiers from the area where Sikh religion was spreading. This was considered a forerunner to political conspiracy. But Aurangzeb was not getting solid evidence to proceed against the Guru. Charges were cooked up and Guru Teg Bahadur was called to Delhi in 1675. Aurangzeb himself left Delhi and went to Punjab. In his absence Teg Bahadur was charged with sedition and told to accept either of the alternatives — Islam or death. He chose the latter. With great inhumanity the executioners severed his head. His head and his body were thrown on the streets of Delhi. These were later taken in control by two of his followers, Jeevan and Lakhi and suitably disposed. Another brave soul to be martyred alongwith Teg Bahadur was Bhai Mati Das.

With this unprecedented sacrifice, the blood of Hindus and Sikhs of Majha began to boil with revenge. The Sikhs had absolute faith in Gurudom and with Mughal atrocities this devotion reached its peak. With Aurangzeb held up in the South, the Sikhs took advantage of this opportunity to organise into a political force.

But the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh did not want to take a hasty step. For 20 years he lived alone in the mountains studying his country's history and religion and the immediate political and social conditions. Responding to the feelings of the people he took up arms as the saviour of religion and motherland and after careful planning laid the foundation of *Khalsa Panth* in which keeping long hair was compulsory. The new identity inspired bravery, resolve to sacrifice and belief of attaining political power among the Sikhs. Organising the Sikh troops he fought many a battle with the Mughals.

During this time two of his teenaged sons Fateh Singh and Jorawar Singh came into the hands of the Sirhind Subedar. When the Subedar heard from them that on being freed they would organise the Sikhs and teach a lesson to the Muslims, he angrily asked his Minister to have them killed. According to one popular story these two boys were sealed alive in a brick wall. After this martyrdom the Sikhs became even more inflamed.

Adverse circumstances forced Guru Gobind Singh to leave Pun-

jab. Perhaps he wanted to experiment with freedom fight in South India or he wanted to study the clever fighting ability of Chhatrapati Shivaji. But unfortunately a betraying Pathan stabbed him. Before his death Guru Gobind had indicated his preference for Banda Bairagi as his successor. Banda's heart was filled with hatred and revenge. To pay the price of his Guru's death, he fell like lightning on Punjab. To avenge the murder of his Guru's sons he killed hundreds of Muslims. Villages upon villages were razed and it seemed as if the foundations of Mughal empire were shaking.

### Mughal Atrocities

In the end, in 1716, he was caught alongwith his 740 followers. He was brought to Delhi in an iron cage. In front of him was a procession of Sikh heads held on points of spears. Everyday a hundred Sikhs were martyred. But there was competition among the Sikhs to be beheaded.

On the eighth day Banda Bairagi was produced before the magistrates. He was forced to kill his son with his own hands. His own flesh was plucked with burning tongs and in this inhuman way he was killed. His associates were also murdered. This was the time of Farukhsier. After Banda's death he increased his measures to crush the Sikhs. The following orders that he issued expose Muslim cruelty and fanaticism:

- 1) No Hindu of Punjab can keep a beard or long hair. Any defiant Hindu should be killed immediately.
- 2) Information about a Sikh shall be rewarded with Rs.5; help to arrest one with Rs. 15 and Rs. 25 would be given for behaed-ing a Sikh. Anything more than this would be compensated with Jagirs (grants)
- 3) Anybody sheltering a Sikh shall be considered a law breaker and will face severe punishment.

Not only this, Lahore's landlord Massa Ranghad took the Golden Temple in his control and to destroy its piety, he organised drinking, dancing and prostitution there. He smoked and spat inside the Temple.

By the end of 1762, Ahmedshah Durrani had *Hermandir Sahib* blown up with explosives and the Sarovar was filled with debris. Before this Taimur had also wrecked *Harmandir Sahib* in 1756. The Sarovar was also defiled.

A band of troops was constituted with the special task of hunting Sikhs. As a result Sikhs with firm faith escaped to jungles. mountains

and the deserts of Rajasthan while the majority of the less courageous cut their hair and shaved their beards. Such destruction was let loose against the Sikhs that nobody could dare give them shelter. Their wives and children were killed. They were dispossessed of land and property. To frighten the people the long-haired were executed at public places. Piles of Sikh heads were placed on cross-roads or displayed on spears. During these times Bhai Mani Singh, Taru Singh and Hakikat Rai were also murdered. Mani Singh and Taru Singh were saintly characters whose murder became a big provocation. Teenaged Hakikat Rai's murder filled the Hindus also with anger towards Muslim laws and Muslim rule.

### **The Wages of Oppression**

It seems that as long as Sikhism was confined to spirituality, not only Hindus but even Muslims respected it and accepted it with full faith. But when it started taking interest in politics, it became the target of Muslim fury. Guru Gobind Singh did not get full support of the Hindu Kings of the hills because his troops tried to forcibly bring them round to his side. The Hindu population was looted and harassed. As a result the Hindu Kings of Bilaspur, Jasova, Jasrota, Nalagarh and Dadwal collected 10,000 troops and joining Fateh Shah of Srinagar, they engaged the 2,000 *Khalsas* of Gobind Singh at Bhangani.

If on this occasion, the Sadhora Governor Sayyad Shah had not helped the Guru, he might have lost his life.

The Mughal troops under Prince Muazzam defeated Hindu kings and visited such terror on their populations that in future they were hesitant to cooperate with Guru Gobind Singh.

After the royal troops had withdrawn the *Khalsas* again started harassing Hindu kings in order to enlist them on their side. Tired of this harassment, the Hindus collected 20,000 troops and with the help of the Sirhind Governor attacked Garhi in Anandpur and Keeratpur. Guru Gobind Singh had to take shelter in Anandpur fort.

With the provisions exhausted, one by one the *Khalsas* started deserting him. He escaped at dead of night towards Garhi Chamkaur but on the way in an encounter two of his sons and his wife Sundari alongwith many *Khalsas* were killed. The Guru himself gave an exemplary exhibition of bravery.

He escaped towards Malwa and remained incognito in Damdama (in the middle of Hansi-Ferozepur). Here he received Aurangzeb's invitation. According to some historians he accepted it and was moving towards south to meet him when he got the information that Aurangzeb had died.

Some say that Guru Gobind Singh was a friend of Aurangzeb's son Bahadur Shah, and helped him in the succession wars: he was honoured in Bahadur Shah's court and marched with the imperial army till his assassination at the hands of his Pathan retainer. History just might have been different if Guru Gobind had not been assassinated by killers hired by a jealous Wazir Khan who was fearful of the influence the Guru had on the Mughal emperor. Guru Gobind died in Nanded in 1708.

### **The Fire of Revenge**

Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh had sent Banda Bairagi to Punjab to take revenge on Muslims. Banda Bairagi reorganised Sikh troops and in 1710 conquered Sirhind with great cruelty. According to Muslim historians, bodies were taken out of burials, ripped apart and thrown out. Unborn children were taken out of women's wombs and murdered.

On the complaint of Hindus that Jalaluddin, Governor of Jalalabad was harassing them he marched towards Jalalabad and on the way destroyed Saharanpur, Behat, Ambehata and Nanota. The surrounding areas had been completely looted. He had finished Muslim power in Eastern Punjab and from Sirhind to Panipat was his undisputed kingdom.

When the Mughal King returned from the South, instead of reaching Delhi he marched to Punjab and in heavy fighting at Aminabad on 10 November 1710 the *Khalsas* were defeated, Banda escaped and took to guerilla warfare for some time but had to give up ultimately in Gurdaspur fort.

### **Discord Among Sikhs**

If Banda Bairagi had received full support of the Sikhs, he could have sounded the death knell of the Mughal empire. The charges against Banda are that he gave little importance to keeping long hair, which was an important external symbol of Sikhism. Being a Vaishnav, he looked down upon meat-eating approved by Guru Gobind. Like Guru Gobind he never consulted the *Khalsas* but imposed his will upon them. He broke his promise of remaining a bachelor and got married. Another major charge against him was that he started considering himself as the undeclared 11th Guru.

According to an agreement entered into with Farukhsier and the Lahore Governor, Banda's deserters were given government jobs with salary of one rupee a day and grants of villages. The terms of the

agreement were 1) *Khalsas* will not indulge in looting, 2) will not help Banda Bairagi, 3) in the event of foreign invasion, the *Khalsa* would assist the king, 4) there will be no cut in *Khalsa* salaries and grants, 5) Hindus will not be converted and their religious places will not be desecrated, 6) Hindus will not be ill-treated and their religious principles will be respected.

Tired of the battlefield, there was positive effect on the Sikhs of this agreement.

### **A Golden Opportunity**

Despite repeated defeats, insults and punishments *Khalsas* went on creeping towards political power during 1716–1768. Muhammad Shah's successors proved foolish and licentious. The governors rebelled and declared themselves independent. The power of Marathas increased so much that they hovered close to Punjab. The Ruhellas in Ruhelkhand and the Jats in Bharatpur became independent. The attacks of Nadirshah and Ahmedshah Abdali also took place in this period. The *Khalsa* constituted *Buddha* (old) *Dal* and *Tarun* (youth) *Dal* and made severe attacks on the weakening Mughal empire. Like ants on a wounded snake, they harassed the Mughal administration. By 1768 the *Khalsa* power had extended from Yamuna to Sind.

Between 1768 and 1798 Punjab was divided into 12 independent *Misls* (means 'state' and 'equal') headed by leading Sikhs. These *Misls* were independent units. They had two specialities: 1) common religion and 2) common enemies. If a non-Sikh attacked any one of them they all joined together to help him. The *Misl* leaders consulted their colleagues and the selection of leaders was not hereditary but based on merit and experience. The looted property was divided among the leaders.

### **Lion of Punjab**

The Shukhtachakiya *Misl* was the luckiest. Its founder was Buddha Singh who had been wounded 40 times in the battlefield. This *Misl* also had a brave and ambitious leader like Maha Singh who had to his credit many a victories even at the early age of 30. Ranjit Singh was only 12 when he took over the leadership of the *Misl* from his father Maha Singh. Ranjit Singh proved so intelligent, brave and popular that he subjugated all *Misls* and formed a single *Khalsa* kingdom with absolute authority. Actually he was a liberal, just and secular ruler. He

was untouched by fanaticism. After a great victory in 1799 when he entered Lahore, not only Sikhs but Hindus and Muslims alike welcomed him heartily. His first task after entering Lahore was to visit the royal mosque for prayers.

In 1699 Guru Gobind Singh had laid the foundation of the Khalsa and given the slogan *Raj Karega Khalsa*. Exactly 100 years later his dream was fulfilled by Ranjit Singh.

If Banda Bairagi had wiped out Muslim power from eastern Punjab then Maharaja Ranjit Singh caused it to disappear in western Punjab as well. Banda and Ranjit Singh's rule was called *Khalsa Raj* but in actual behaviour it was Hindu Raj.

Before his death in June 1839, Maharaja Ranjit Singh called Govindram and asked him to donate the Kohinoor diamond to Jagannath Puri Temple. Of his four provincial governors, two were Hindus. Among high officials, Ministers, Gangaram, Dinanath, Diwanchand, Beliram, Khushal Singh and Tej Singh etc were *Brahmins*. Fakir Azizuddin was his chief counsellor and Ilaahibaksh in-charge of his artillery. Describing the anguish at his death. Dr Gokul Chand Narang says:

"Not only Sikhs but the entire Hindu population saw in his reign the peak of Hindu glory. They considered him their protector and liberator. They not only gave him their love but considered him saviour of their families, their worship places and of national prestige. When he died in 1839, the entire State was plunged into grief. Every person felt as if he had lost his father and protector. Every where it was being said that on his death entire Punjab had been orphaned" ('Transformation of Sikhism' page 03).

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lahore was caught in flames of civil war. Fanaticism, anti-national sentiments and foreign intervention turned a secular administration into conspiracies and violence. None of the successors of Ranjit Singh like Khadag Singh, Naunihal Singh or Rani Chand Kaur could control the storm of suspicion, enmity and hatred.

Khadag Singh's in-laws Sandhawalias tried to seize power with the help of the British but failed. The divided Sikh troops engaged the British at four places but lost everywhere. Then at the request of the Lahore administration, the British captured Multan and at Chillianwala in the last fierce and decisive battle the Sikhs met bitter defeat. With this defeat, the Sikh troops became scattered, weak and even unarmed.

When on 29 March 1849 Governor General Lord Dalhousie

announced induction of Punjab into the British empire, then the very next day lamps were lit in Golden Temple in joyous celebration. According to Sikh historian Gajraj Singh, the Golden Temple *Granthi* Bhai Makhan Singh, an old *Sevadar* of the temple Sardar Lahna Singh and his brother Jodh Singh were actively involved in this celebration. (Journal of Regional History, Section 3, page 89) All this happened just 10 years after the death of Ranjit Singh.

Looking at this march of events objectively, one comes to the conclusion that except for the times of Ranjit Singh, Sikh history has been a hotch-potch of religion and politics. Although the Hindus used to offer their first-born to Sikhism, treated gurdwaras as their own worship places, helped the *Khalsa* troops; the Sikhs always crushed, insulted and ignored their sentiments. The result is that the Golden Temple, whose foundation was laid by a Muslim, whose walls were raised under the supervision of Hindus, in the same Golden-Temple neither a Muslim nor a Hindu is welcome today.

When faith goes astray and treachery becomes the rule for every one, this destiny is inevitable.

# 6

## The Deceitful British

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THE British acquired Punjab through diplomacy and intrigue but they could not rest content until they had removed the very basis of the *Khalsa Raj*. The foundation of *Khalsa Raj* rested on cultural amity and military disposition. So the British set about in a very planned manner to crush the amity, the religious goodwill and the military disposition of Punjab.

Apart from the soldiers, the people living in the areas flanked by the Ravi, Beas and the Sutlej were traditionally fearless and great fighters. The plan to destroy this militaristic streak was to be accomplished in three phases. In the first phase Sikh soldiers were disarmed, cashiered and sent home permanently. In the second phase the recruitment of Sikhs in the Army was stopped. According to one estimate the Sikhs surrendered 1,19,796 arms. Dr Khilnani has expressed surprise how the Sikhs, who had only a few days ago fought three fierce battles with the British, quietly surrendered their precious arms. According to Dr Latif this was the result of the great administrative skill of the British.

Another significant reason was that their holiest of holy shrines, the Golden Temple, by accepting the suzerainty of the British had spread a feeling of inferiority among them. So they thought it better to hitch their sails to the fortunes of the British, who had gained control over most of India. The States of Jind, Nabha, Patiala and Kapurthala were supporting the British even at the time of Ranjit Singh. Influenced by all these factors, the brave soldiers of Punjab laid down their arms. They were unhappy with Lord Dalhousie for having treacherously amalgamated Punjab into the British Empire. But they were also aware of the strong opposition against amalgamation expressed by the Resident of Lahore, Sir Henry Lawrence. With this posture and through some promises that he made, Henry Lawrence won the confidence of Sikh soldiers who laid down their arms without any protest.

In the third phase, except for a few important forts, the British had the rest razed to the ground. These forts had played a great role in maintaining the military disposition of the Sikhs. To these were tied their past, their history and their bravery. With their destruction slowly this influence also started fading and the Punjab villager became more of a farmer than a soldier.

According to the Calcutta Review (1856) there was not a single Sikh soldier at that time in the Bombay and Madras Presidency. There were about 1500 in the Bengal Presidency. In the regular Punjab Army they were not recruited at all and among the irregular troops, their number was just 80. In the army the Sikhs were derogatorily referred to as 'Dirty Soldier' (probably because of their long hair). Pressure was put on them to cut their hair and they were persuaded that it was more honourable to take to farming than to remain soldiers.

An English ICS officer Thorburn, who had been the Finance Commissioner of Punjab, made certain allegations of opportunism and greed against the Sikhs in his book 'The Punjab in Peace and War' (1883). He wrote:

"At heart the Sikhs are traders, that is, their eye is always on their profit. But since the 1846 war, whether in the battlefield or in agriculture, they have met with ill-fortune instead of financial gain. When they found that under the new rulers it would be more comfortable to stay at home and adopt their traditional occupation of agriculture, they happily went away to the fields."

With this came deterioration in their financial position, their domination over the rest of society also weakened and even their attachment to the 'five Ks' began to loosen. It seemed that their religious identity was confined to arms and outward symbols.

The Punjab Administration Report of 1851-52 says:

"The Sikh *Panth* and their religious morality is fast descending to where their political fortunes have gone. There are two parts of the old *Khalsa*, the first comprises the followers of Guru Nanak and the second contains Guru Gobind Singh's disciples. The first one will continue in future also but the second would lose itself in the folds of Time. Nanak's followers are fewer but they are peaceful and firmly believe in their traditional values. But the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh, who came into existence much later, who have 'Singh' compulsorily joined to their names, for whom *dharma* was war and victory, now do not enjoy much respect because of the loss of prestige of *Khalsa* (with the seizure of arms and ban on recruitment).

"They came into the *Khalsa* fold in their hundreds and are now

fleeing it in the same number. They are merging back into the Hindu society from which they came and are now raising their children as normal-haired instead of as long-haired ones. Crowds no longer assemble in big numbers at the Amritsar Sarovar. In the annual fairs also the attendance has thinned. The special ceremony to ordain children into Sikhism is now rarely seen."

With the end of military service for them, the Sikhs thought it was no longer important to keep long hair. The differences that had cropped up between the long-haired and the normal haired *Punjabis* started disappearing in the new situation. In the 1855 census the astonishing fact came to light that in their original base Manjha (Lahore division) the number of *Khalsa* Sikhs had come down to just 2 lakh in a population of 30 lakh. In this context the Punjab Administration Report of 1855-56 says:

"It is now confirmed that the Sikh population is fast dwindling. Modern Sikhism is a political organisation which was formed completely out of Hindus and in which anybody could enter in special circumstances or walk out at will. Nobody is born a Sikh just as Hindus or Muslims are. To become a Sikh a special ordaining ceremony has to be gone through. Now that the Sikh Commonwealth has been shattered, people no longer find it necessary to take to Sikhism and are returning to the Hindu fold."

The so-called leaders of the Sikh *Panth* were not happy with this situation. These were the same people who had organised celebrations at the Golden Temple on receiving certain assurances from the British. Among the *Khalsas* also there was bitter criticism of the way the Sikhs had been led to their downfall. There was despair and anger even in the Golden Temple. The result was that the Sikhs started giving fresh assurances of loyalty to the British. As a part of this policy, even the keys of the Golden Temple Treasury were handed over to the British. The leading Sikhs repeatedly requested the new rulers to lift the ban on Sikh recruitment in the Army. Sir John Lawrence respected the bravery of the Khalsas and believed in blunting the opponents by giving them facilities instead of suppressing them. So he thought of restoring their former state. The sharp eyes of Lord Dalhousie also perceived that a jobless *Khalsa* soldier is like a spark in ashes which can burst into flames at the gust of an ordinary air of rebellion. He commented:

"The population of the area flanked by the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej has the disposition of fighters and with the addition of a large

number of dismissed soldiers the area has become a bigger source of danger."

To obviate this danger and to oblige the Golden Temple, the Sikh kings and their loyal *Khalsas*, the clever British resumed recruitment of the long-haired into the Army and the Police. But the recruitment was done after completely convincing themselves that these Sikhs would be loyal to the British. Five regiments and five platoons of Sikhs were raised immediately and these gave ample evidence of their loyalty on the banks of the Godavari and in suppressing the first war of independence in 1857. In the same period a 'Punjab Frontier Force' was formed to protect the borders with Afghanistan and in its strength of 11,000 there were 10 per cent Sikhs. To keep internal peace in Punjab a police force of 15,000 was raised and in it also the majority was of Sikhs.

### The 'Mutiny'

The British presented the 'Mutiny' to the Sikhs as an "attempt at return of Mughal rule with the help of eastern UP troops." They opened doors of the Army fully to the Sikhs so as to cash in on their frustration, anger and dejection. The Khalsa had not forgotten that the British seized control of Punjab with the help of eastern UP troops, the Mughal king of the time and the Nawab of Jhajjar, reducing them to joblessness and bondage. Sir Henry Lawrence had found favour with the Sikhs by his good administration and liberal attitudes. He took advantage of this opportunity by filling Sikhs minds with revenge against rebellious eastern UP and Muslim troops. The Sikhs were in a dilemma but when they saw the Sikh kings of Nabha, Jind, Patiala and Kapurthala entering the fray on the side of the British, they also wholeheartedly decided to help the British. Dr Gokul Chand Narang says:

"The Sikhs who had practised militarism for generations, could not easily turn their hand to the plough. So when they were promised grants and pensions, they readily entered the battlefield in large numbers on behalf of the British."

On 14th May, the eastern UP troops in Amritsar were disarmed. Similar action was taken in Govindgarh. Still the eastern UP troops were able to stage revolts in Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Ambala, Thanesar, Sialkot, Hoti Mardan, Peshawar, Phillaur and Multan. But the revolt was crushed mercilessly. By the end of July, 13,000 of the 58,000 Indian troops in Punjab had been disarmed. In this action the Sikh troops had fully co-operated with the British.

In the short time of four months, 18 new battalions were raised which mainly comprised of the Sikhs who were loyal to the British.

The Sikh States of Patiala, Jind, Nabha and Kapurthala recruited 17,000 Sikh soldiers and sent them to help the British. On occasions, some Sikh kings themselves led their troops in battle. The credit for the ultimate British victory in September 1857 goes to the Sikhs.

Punjab gave not only 34,000 troops to crush the 'Mutiny' but also gave all kinds of financial help. Commander-in-chief General Wilson admitted that the Sikh contribution in the final victory was significant. Sir John Lawrence also conceded, if the Sikhs had not helped the British, they might as well have packed up from India. Even the British Parliament expressed gratitude to the Sikhs for this help.

Bahadurshah Zafar had sent a special messenger, Tajuddin, to the kings of Patiala, Nabha and Jind with a request to join the holy fight for freedom. His mission was to clarify how the Hindus and Muslims had joined together to drive out the British from India. But Tajuddin wrote in his report:

"The Sikh leaders are lazy and cowards. There is little hope from them. They are toys in the hands of 'Englishmen'. I met them alone and talked to them. I opened my heart to them but in my view they cannot be trusted."

Bahadurshah Zafar sent more messengers later but they were murdered.

In this time of revolution if the Sikh troops had merely remained neutral, a British defeat was certain and the 100 years of additional bondage that India suffered could have been avoided. But their religious frenzy had been so roused that, in the words of Khwaja Hasan Nizami, : "When the Sikh troops entered Delhi's Jama Masjid, they killed and cooked pigs there and used the place as a latrine and urinal to destroy its sanctity." Probably they were taking revenge for the historical event of desecration of the Golden Temple by Massa Ranghad.

Right from 1846 the British had spread a canard in the name of Guru Teg Bahadur that the "hatted ones" (Englishmen) will rule India and dig the grave of the Mughal empire. To imprint this prediction on the Sikh minds Hudson had two Mughal princes murdered and their bodies were kept for display at the same place where about 150 years ago Aurangzeb had displayed the head of Guru Teg Bahadur. When this news reached the Sikh population of Punjab, they were convinced that by helping the British they had added to the prestige of the *Panth*.

There is another significant fact. Before 'Mutiny' there were only 2,000 Sikh troops in India and they were all stationed outside Punjab. They all took part in the revolt thus proving that one can appreciate the feelings of freedom and self-respect only by remaining away from

an atmosphere of communal creed. On 5th June 1857, the Ludhiana regiment stationed in Benaras raised its banner of revolt and extended help to the 'Mutineers'. In the Mhow Cantt. of Madhya Pradesh 80 revolting Sikh soldiers were sent to jail in Agra. Twenty-one Sikh soldiers of Jhansi's 12th regiment were executed. In Allahabad also the Sikh troops had created problems for the authorities.

### **The Rewards**

Punjab was flooded with rewards and punishments after the 'Mutiny'. Extremist English officers and Sikhs were in favour of razing Delhi to the ground and destroying the Jama Masjid. This was prevented by the intervention of John Lawrence. Loyal Sikhs were given prizes, positions and grants. The Nabha king was rewarded with the Jhajjar area, Jind king with Dadri and the Patiala king was granted the Narnaul division area. The Kapurthala and Kashmir rulers were also rewarded.

The Sikh-majority areas were flooded with facilities like canals, roads, bridges, railway lines, schools and hospitals. Steps were taken to improve the condition of farmers and to improve the administration. An atmosphere was created that Sikh interests in Punjab were tied to those of the British.

The eastern UP troops, with whose help the British had conquered Bengal in 1757 and Punjab in 1849, could not be trusted anymore, after the 'Mutiny'. The Marathas had also taken part in the 'Mutiny' hence their loyalty was also suspect. When the eastern UP troops and the Marathas were sacked from the Army their vacancies could be filled only by the Sikhs.

At this time appeared on the scene a man whose conclusions deeply influenced the British administration and their military. Even in the social and religious life of Punjab he brought great turmoil. This man was Macauliffe. Macauliffe was not merely a person but an ideology which gave such a direction to the Sikh mind that till today it keeps giving evidence of being cut off from the mainstream of India's life. That people like Bhindranwale, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Shabeg Singh and Amrik Singh are being born today is proof that Macauliffe's influence remains undiminished.

### **Policy Change**

The British came to the conclusion that to retain the loyalty of the Sikhs, they should be kept away from Hindu influence, an awareness of a new nationality must be created in them, their religious passions

must be encouraged and a feeling of superiority instilled in them. If this was done, this section of society would keep holding the flag of the British empire firmly and honestly. The psychological ways they devised to achieve this end make interesting reading. An English official Komma wrote in the September (1923) issue of 'Fortnightly Review':

"After the Mutiny when Sikhs were recruited into the British Army in a big way, the officials discovered a number of virtues in Sikh religion. The rituals that Guru Gobind Singh had adopted started being followed blindly in the regiments. Every Sikh was treated as superior to an ordinary farmer. He was told that he had nothing in common with the Hindus and therefore he should forget his origin. Every regiment was provided with a granthi (Sikh priest). Under his guidance the new recruits were trained in *Khalsa Panth* in a pious and orthodox atmosphere. Similarly great respect was shown to the religious book *Granth Saheb*. When *Granth Saheb* was taken out in a procession, the British officers used to salute it standing at attention. They used to greet Sikh soldiers with '*Vahe Guru ji Ka Khalsa, Vahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh*' As a result when a Sikh soldier retired, he returned to his village a fanatic. Even in an enveloping atmosphere of Hinduism he kept the flame of Sikh religion flying."

D.Patry, additional director of British secret service, said in his report in 1911: "Every effort is made to keep the Sikh soldiers away from the contagion of idol-worship. Efforts are also made to instil in them a feeling of separate nationhood. And then this feeling is nourished in every way".

When Sikhs trained in this atmosphere returned home, not only was their own family caught in dogmatism, they also influenced the society around. When they went to *gurdwaras* or other public places they tried to show off their dogmatism, separateness and imaginary superiority. As a result the Sikh community gave birth to some extremist organisations which are till today challenging India's unity, communal amity and cultural co-operation. These extremist organisations first received the patronage of the British and today party politics is encouraging them.

### **The Macauliffe Magic**

Macauliffe was an ICS officer who resigned as district judge in 1893 to take up the writing of the history of Sikh religion. He totally devoted himself to this task and wrote a book 'Sikh Religion' which

was published from Oxford in 1909 in six volumes. Sikh intellectuals consider it the best research work on Sikhism and treat it with great respect.

In 1898 a Sikh scholar Kahan Singh Nabha wrote the book 'We are not Hindus' thus laying seeds of Hindu-Sikh discord. This book became so popular in the Sikh community that the separatist Sikhs still consider it their Bible. Macauliffe received full support from Kahan Singh. In fact the latter was so close to Macauliffe that the Englishman willed the copyright and the royalty of his book to him. Their close liaison is apparent if you compare the two books.

Before Macauliffe, India House had entrusted a German professor named Dr Trumpp with studying Sikh religion and translating "Guru Granth Saheb" into English. He fulfilled his responsibility honestly and the conclusions he came to refuted many of the traditions adopted by the Sikhs. Although Trumpp had provided proof for his conclusions, the Sikhs felt hurt and expressed their anger. They accused him of insulting Granth Saheb. To please their loyal subjects, the British looked around for a person who would carry out the work according to their wishes. They secured the resignation of ICS member Max Arthur Macauliffe and appointed him to do this task.

Macauliffe's point of view is obvious from the following excerpts from the preface of his book:

"In our times one of the principal agencies for the preservation of the Sikh religion has been the practice of military officers commanding Sikh Regiments to send Sikh recruits to receive baptism according to the rites prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh and endeavour to preserve them in their subsequent career from the contagion of idolatry. The military thus ignoring or despising the restraints imposed by the civil policy of what is called 'religious neutrality' have practically become the main heir-ophants and guardians of the Sikh Religion." (Preface Page 25).

"Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its fold, the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is inevitable without State support." (Introduction Page 57).

"As Buddhism without State support completely lost its hold in India, so it is apprehended that without state support Sikhism will also be lost in the great chaos of Indian Religions." (Introduction Page 57).

"Truly wonderful are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is

like a boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its fold, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries ago Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism, which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a prehistoric period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way it has converted the uneducated Islam in India into a semi-Paganism; and in this way it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak." (Introduction Page 57).

"Notwithstanding the Sikh Gurus, powerful denunciation of Brahmins secular Sikhs now rarely do anything without their assistance. Brahmins help them to be born, help them to wed, help them to die, and help their souls after death to obtain a state of bliss." (Introduction Page 57).

"I am not without hope that when enlightened rulers become acquainted with the merits of the Sikh religion, they will not willingly let it perish in the great abyss in which so many creeds have been engulfed." (Introduction Page 88).

"A movement to declare the Sikhs Hindus in direct opposition to the teachings of the Guru is widespread and of long duration. I have only quite recently met in Lahore youngmen claiming to be descendants of the Gurus who told me that they were Hindus and that they could not read the characters in which the Sacred books of the Sikhs are written. Whether the object of their tutors and advisers was or was not to make them disloyal, such youths are ignorant of the Sikh religion and its prophesies in favour of the English and contract exclusive social customs and prejudices to the extent of calling us *Mlechchas* or persons of impure desires and inspiring disgust for the customs and habits of Christians." (Preface)

Macauliffe was obviously trying to ensure the loyalty of the Sikhs by persuading them that the British empire was a protector of their religion. With interpolations and arbitrary interpretations of historical incidents Macauliffe confused the Sikh mind. Even top Sikh scholars tolerated his attempts thereby giving it their silent assent. What the book contained was perhaps not so important for them as the fact that an English magistrate had written it and that its six volumes had been published in English and at Oxford. Here is an example of Macauliffe's treachery culled from his essay. "How the Sikhs can become fighters":

"After capturing Anandpur when the rulers of hill areas and the Mughals came together then somebody asked Guru Gobind Singh — "How will the fistful Sikhs stand up to the large Hindu-Muslim Army?" The Guru replied: "Whatever pleases the Timeless will take place. When the Turk troops arrive, my Sikhs will launch assaults upon assaults. The Khalsa's eyes would open and he would understand the game of war. In the midst of clashing of arms, he would partake of divine knowledge, peace and happiness. Then will arrive the Englishman and together with the Khalsa would rule the East, the West and all directions. Holy Baba Nanak would provide them with all kind of prosperity. The Englishman would be very powerful and would capture several States with the help of the sword. The combined strength of the English and the Sikhs would be very great. As long as they remain together, English rule will expand to great lengths and they would receive all kinds of prosperity. Wherever they take their Army, they would emerge victorious and rule through subordinates. Then every house will have wealth, peace, dharma and education and every house will have a woman."

Another similar prediction was put in the mouth of Guru Teg Bahadur with the implication that after the Khalsa Raj will come the rule of the "Topewallah" (Englishman) and that it would give prosperity and respect to the Sikhs. According to Komma, some sycophantic author interpolated this prophecy after the first British victory in Punjab.

Sikh leaders have been found repeating this prediction time and again. At the time of the First World War, when the need arose for recruiting a large number of Sikhs into the British Army, the Golden Temple manager Sardar Aroor Singh took the help of this prediction in 1914 to invite the Sikhs to join the British Army.

### **The Influence of Macauliffe**

The situation today has changed. Historical theories are being given new meanings, the tendency to study history objectively is growing. But the Sikh mind is still clinging like a leech to Macauliffe's conclusions. Macauliffe's contemporaries Trumpp and McNichol proved in their books the fact that Guru Gobind Singh had adopted the Hindu way of life, customs and beliefs and had wiped out the differences between Sikhs and Hindus. But the supporters of separatism give no attention to these but read Malcolm, Cunningham and Macauliffe with great interest. As a result the Sikh mind is still as

far away from Hindus as it was at the time of Macauliffe. Dr Sher Singh's following views prove this:

"Hindu religion is a slow, gentle and far-sighted organisation as is proved by historical events. At first it keeps tolerating a new religion or doctrine, even adopting it itself and then, if the followers of the new religion are not careful, it vanishes into the mighty ocean of Hinduism. According to Dr Batty Raimon, this capability of Hindu religion to incorporate and collect all diversities into itself is its great virtue. Thousands of doctrines were born but even after making great efforts they were lost".

"Buddhism is slowly getting the same treatment in India. Even those religions which were born and nurtured outside could not escape being coloured by Hinduism on entering India. It is possible that they might become branches of Hinduism at a later date. If we watch the beliefs and the way of life of Indian Muslims, Indian Christians and Indian Parsis then this astonishing influence and absorption power of Hinduism will become clear. Soon after Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism came under the influence of Hinduism. Ever since the Sikhs have been engaged in a battle for survival. The result is that they have not been able to properly isolate their doctrine nor have they been able to reach the mystical base of Sikhism" (*Gurmat Darshan*, pages 21 – 23).

Dr Sher Singh quotes the following words of Sir A.C. Lyall — "As the Sikhs progressed in their political and day-to-day life, they made fewer efforts to separate themselves from Hindus." (*Asiatic Studies*). He expresses his concern over this fact and calls upon the Sikh society to keep its expected distance from Hinduism and maintain a separate identity.

The Khalistan supporters do not consider the secular Maharaja Ranjit Singh a true Sikh. In their view a true Sikh is one who breaks away from his original race, considers it untouchable and keeps as much distance from it as is maintained between Hindus and Muslims or Christians and Jews. This is how Dr Sher Singh shows the parochialism of the Sikh mind towards Maharaja Ranjit Singh:

"Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh kings and Sardars usually followed the Hindu way of life. In their day-to-day life they adopted such rituals and customs which were actually Hindu and were only later adopted by Sikhism or given a Sikh colour. Originally they were pure Sikhs but with time had been influenced by Hinduism . . . For Maharaja Ranjit Singh the way of spreading Sikhism was merely providing grants, land, marble or royal tents for *gurdwaras* . . . In the religious context he,

cannot be remembered as the Ashoka of the Budhists or the Aurangzeb of the Muslims." (*Gurmat Darshan*, Pages 21-23).

During this period the British secured influence over not only *gurdwaras* but educational institutions as well. Especailly the students of Khalsa College, Amritsar, emerged as dogmatic Sikhs and spread the views of Macauliffe throughout their life. Just as Aligarh Muslim University was established to retain Muslim loyalty to the British, similar was the purpose in starting the Amristsar Khalsa college.



WHILE generally the Sikhs and supported the British, there was a noble exception. An organisation which later came to be known as *Namdharis*, took firm roots. Although this organisation was quite old, it was given a shape in the new circumstances by Baba Ram Singh, who as a soldier in Ranjit Singh's army had watched the British snatching the country's independence.

Ram Singh felt the downfall of the *Khalsa Raj* was due to bickerings between religious and political leaders and corruption, which had seeped into the general public too. To deal with this situation, Ram Singh adopted neither the dogmatism of the Sikhs nor the superstitions of the Hindus.

He was dead against untouchability but favoured observance of cleanliness in eating methods. While he condemned idol-worship or grave-worship and other such rituals, he was actively in favour of cow-protection and *havana*. He preached against smoking, drinking, meat-eating and luxuries. He spoke against costly marriages and supported widow remarriage. He tried to stop the growing *gurudom* in temples and gurdwaras. With an eye on independence, he advocated boycott of foreign postal system, education system, service of the British government and the British courts.

The result was that thousands became his disciples, who came to be known as *Kukas*. Baba Ram Singh became so popular that people started calling his guru Balak Singh the eleventh guru and himself (Ram Singh) the twelfth guru.

Jealous of his growing popularity, some people started complaining to the British about him. They started campaigning that the *Kuka* organisation was a conspiracy against the British.

Some enthusiastic *Kukas* and jobless soldiers who had jumped into this movement occasionally delivered anti-government speeches. The government's Secretary T.D. Forsyth wrote on 30 June 1863 that

Ram Singh's speeches are harmless and he says certain good things. But certain stories are being spread against him which describe him as anti-government. Whatever be the motives of Ram Singh, his speeches have so moved the people that there is danger of trouble during the coming Diwali. In view of this he should be detained and kept under surveillance.

Enraged by his arrest, some zestful followers of Ram Singh damaged graves of some venerable people and destroyed idols outside some temples in Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Sialkot, Gujranwala and Hoshiarpur. Many *Kukas* were punished for this but because it was a religious issue, the Government took a lenient view.

Some *Kukas* entered the armies of some State rulers in Amritsar, Ramkot, etc and killed those butchers who used to slaughter cows. In 1870 Baba Ram Singh sent his messengers to Nepal, Avadh, Hyderabad and some other States. This alarmed the government although it could not ascertain the purpose of these visits.

In 1849 the government lifted the ban on cow slaughter, which angered the people. On 14 June 1870 the *Kukas* attacked the slaughter house near the Golden Temple and killed four butchers who used to slaughter cows. Similar attacks were later launched in Malot, Malerkotla and Ramkot. About 47 guilty *Kukas* were tied to cannons and blown up.

Many killers of butchers could not be traced by the police. But because they had violated the laws, Ram Singh issued an appeal during a public address that those who were guilty should themselves get up, confess their crime and surrender. Out of love for their guru or belief in true religion, one by one they stood up and gave themselves up to the police. There was no anger, no resistance, no complaint.

It seems some mischievous elements had joined the *Kukas* to bring a bad name to them and to rouse the government against them. Baba Ram Singh was against attacks on slaughter houses and he himself had committed no crime. Still his camp was searched. Nothing incriminating was found, still he was arrested and sent to Allahabad and from there to Rangoon where he died on 18 November 1884.

Baba Ram Singh may not have entered the political arena to fight for freedom but the basis he was preparing was certainly helping to create a climate for a struggle for freedom among the Punjabis. The British had become aware of this danger. It is surmised that with the help of some Sikh lackeys, the British hatched a conspiracy to crush this movement. There is evidence in support of this supposition. On 22 March 1872, some leading religious and political leaders of Punjab approached the Lt. Governor of Punjab and gave him a signed

memorandum describing the *Kuka* movement as "wicked, corrupt and anti-*panth*". The memorandum praised the government steps to suppress the movement and offered full help to them.

Among those who signed this memorandum were Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia, Golden Temple manager Sardar Mangal Singh Ramgarhia, the Akal Bunga priest Bhai Gulab Singh, the Golden Temple *granthi* Bhai Jassa Singh, the Ramgarh *Mahant* Bhai Gulab Singh, Sardar Gulab Singh Bhagolwalia, Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, Sardar Bakshish Singh Sandhawalia, Sardar Ajit Singh Arariwala and Sardar Jawahar Singh Jafarwala.

This is no coincidence that on Dec. 1, 1873, that is only one year after giving the memorandum, the very same people formed an extremist organisation by the name of Singh Sabha which had the full blessings of the British. Historians suspect the hand of these people in maligning the *Kuka* movement, in crushing it and in getting Baba Ram Singh arrested. Later Singh Sabha took such deep roots in Sikh society that the *Kuka* movement slowly died.



HUSHWANT Singh is considered an enlightened and objective thinker. Thirty two years ago, in the preface to his book 'The Sikhs' (Allen and Unwin, 1953) he wrote:

"The main reason for writing this account of my people is the sad thought that alongwith my effort the last chapter of the story of the Sikhs is being written. By the end of this century they would become a forgotten phase of history.

"The most significant result of the political changes in independent India has been the weakening of racist, religious and separatist forces. As far as the Sikhs are concerned, it means lessening of tensions between *Jats* and non-*Jats* within the community and between Hindus and Sikhs outside it. With the increasing tendency to abandon their external signs and identity symbols the Sikhs are fast merging into Hinduism. If this rate of merger continues there is no doubt that by the end of this century Sikhism will end up by being a branch of Hinduism and the Sikh people will become a part of Hindu society."

If today a Sikh avoids keeping long hair, the reason is not that some Hindu *Mahant* has criticised his creed, or that the Government has barred the doors of employment to him, or some political party has shunned him, or some Hindu family has been reluctant to give their daughter to him. He does so because he has not been made a Sikh on the basis of his nature, capacity or aptitude but because he has been born into a Sikh household. A philosophy which is imposed on a person for external reasons cannot earn his honest commitment.

*Namdhari* and *Nirankari* movements in Punjab were aimed at reviving Sikhism. But those who think that Guru Granth Saheb, Harmandir Sahib, the holy sarovar and keeping long hair is the ultimate truth and a guarantee of happiness throughout life, are mistaken. When this misconception is about to be broken, the tenacious ones

resort to some agitation so that the illusion continues.

The entire Sikh society is in a dilemma today. Is it the *Khalsa Panth* or the Sikh *Panth* which is to be protected? They are making futile efforts to reconcile Nanak and Gobind. As long as it is not understood that Nanak is the end and Gobind merely one of the means, Sikhism will not recapture its past glory. There is need in life for both Gobind and Nanak but it has to be understood that Nanak is needed all the time, every moment and the need for Gobind arises in special circumstances, not always. To remain armed 24 hours and to keep swinging the sword has no meaning. Purposes which can be accomplished through devotion and sacrifice cannot be achieved by the sword. It is for the Sikhs to reply whether it is Sarbat Ka Bhala (the good of all) in sabotaging rail lines, burning railway stations and breaking canalways. In the eyes of the general public however, Sikh religion has become an absurdity. Doubts are being expressed on the history of Sikh sacrifices and on their patriotism.

### Nanak and Kabir

There has been no big creed, book or priest behind Kabir but from Kashmir to Kanyakumari he is fondly remembered. His sayings have of their own reached the ordinary people. In higher education he is a subject of study, doctoral theses are being written on him and writers are writing books on him. All this is being done not by establishing a Kabir University like the Guru Nanak University. There is not even a primary school in his name, what to speak of a college. The secret of Kabir's popularity is that he remained open and free like the sky, the sunlight and air. He did not get caught in any creed.

The way of making Nanak universal like Kabir is not razing gurdwaras, cutting off hair or shunning politics. The only need is that these things should not nourish an egotism which Nanak had prohibited. All these things need to be sublimated in favour of the country and society so that Sikh *dharma* is able to achieve *Sarbat Ka Bhala*. An atmosphere is to be created in which hearts should not be broken but joined together. If this was possible in the past, why can't it be achieved again? There is no dearth of liberal, far-sighted and compassionate among the Sikhs and we hope they will have an effective say in Punjab in future.

Very few people are interested in knowing how Nanak was understood in the past. But never before the need to understand him was greater. Even if Nanak's followers do not keep long hair, visit the gurdwara or even read Granth Sahib regularly, a true understanding

of Nanak is possible in them. And in this way trust in Sikhs would increase in society. The comparative study of religions, increasing faith in humanity and the tremendous progress in science has made it into a small accessible world. In the present context, all the arguments, excuses or illusions of separatism, which were considered relevant in the past, have ceased to have any meaning. In the changing circumstances the Sikhs will have to reconsider their traditional thought process so that Nanak can be spread universally and more and more people could take advantage of his life's teachings.

### **Welcome to Dalhousie**

Lord Dalhousie has written in his report that his aim was wiping out Sikh power:

"I have to bring the Sikhs under my control after finishing off Sikhism. This work I have to do soon, completely and in such a way that there is nothing left to do about it in future." Dalhousie did exactly as he had promised. Still he went into the Golden Temple with his shoes on. He walked round the holy place with his shoes and thousands of Sikhs quietly watched this sight. What else could they do? They had themselves celebrated the coming of Dalhousie to the Golden Temple by illuminating it." ('The Sikhs')

This was the result of comforts received through loyalty to the British. First the British crushed the Sikhs and then with the same agility tried to treat their wounds. A feeling of gratitude therefore was natural. This loyalty and devotion to the British continued till 1913. Referring to this period, Dr Gokul Chand Narang describes the following incident:

"I remember when Queen Victoria died, then in one well known town of Doaba, a Sikh leader sent a big bucket into the well and invited the Sikhs to come and wash their hair in mourning for the Queen. He considered the death of the Queen not merely as his own mother's but as the death of the mother of the entire Khalsa community" (Transformation of Sikhism, Page 337)

### **Guru Singh Sabha**

The Sikh controllers of Golden Temple were puppets in the hands of the British. The people who had Baba Ram Singh expelled from the Panth in 1873 now formed the Guru Singh Sabha which has a significant place in modern Sikh history. According to Dr Jagjit Singh the Guru Singh Sabha was established for the following reasons:

1. With seizure of power from them, the Sikhs were in trouble.
2. The control of Amritsar, Akal Takht and Taran Taran gurdwaras had gone into the hands of the British.
3. With the propagation of Christianity, the young were forgetting their religion.
4. Those claiming descent from Bedis and Sodhis had become self-proclaimed gurus.
5. Because of *Nirmale* priests, Hindu deities, Puranic tales, Diwali–Dussehra festivals etc. became significant among the Sikhs and Gurbani became a part of Hindu philosophy. On occasions like marriages and deaths, *Brahmins* were called to perform the rituals.
6. To lift the Sikhs up from this downfall, *Nirankari* and *Namdhari* movements emerged but the Sikhs were again ready to go down.
7. In 1875 Swami Dayanand formed *Arya Samaj* which campaigned against Sikhism also, together with attacks on other religions. Because of this the position of Sikhs was affected.
8. *Sanatani* preacher Shradhdharam Phillauri spoke against the gurus in an Amritsar meeting due to which the Sikhs were agitated.

It seems that these reasons have been manufactured by Dr Jagjit Singh on the basis of the achievements of Guru Singh Sabha. Otherwise there are many proofs available which show that Guru Singh Sabha was formed for the benefit of the British. Why is that the same people who signed the memorandum against Baba Ram Singh later founded the Guru Singh Sabha? The groups who were with the British at the time of the fall of *Khalsa Raj* in Lahore were now congratulating Guru Singh Sabha. Can an honest Sikh historian deny that the British gave help to the Guru Singh Sabha in the beginning? Here are some counter questions for them:

1-2. How was the loss of power a great disaster for the *Panth*? Leading Sikhs had themselves entrusted the control of gurdwaras to the British with the aim of running them better.

3. Sikhs were no less active in the propagation of Christianity. Why protest when the Sikhs had themselves given the keys of gurdwaras and educational institutions to the British. How Sikhs were converted to Christianity is shown in an interesting example given by Dr Dharmanant Singh in his book '*Vedic Gurmat*' (Page 81):

"Subedar Mit Singh Ji was once a very devoted Sikh. The following account he himself recounted at Taran Taran in July 1915. In his hand was the new testament and he was going to propagate Christianity in villages far and near. He said 'after obtaining retirement as I alighted from the train the first thing I did was to reach Darbar Sahib (Taran Taran) with offerings. It

was only 7 o'clock in the morning. The priest said 'The offerings will be accepted only after 9 a.m.' I pleaded with him a great deal but the priest would not listen. Fretting and fuming I went to clergyman Gilford Sahib and asked him to make me a Christian immediately and accompany me to the Darbar Sahib alongwith the offerings. The clergyman advised me against hasty action. But I insisted. So, after falling from Sikhism, alongwith clergyman Gilford and the offerings, I reached Darbar Sahib before nine and the priests did not refuse the offerings. In this area now I have had over 200 persons baptised."

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's minor son Prince Dilip Singh was taken to England and made a Christian with the aim of depriving him of the Lahore throne. When the Prince became an adult he got wise to the schemes of the British and renounced Christianity and re-adopted the religion of his forefathers. He decided to return to India but his relatives poisoned the ears of the British saying his return would provoke the Sikhs and an uncontrollable situation could develop. So he was stopped at Aden and made to return to England. Those who later took up the leadership of Guru Singh Sabha also advised Dilip Singh to stay away as there was little respect left for him among the Sikhs and there could be agitations against him if he returned.

The Sikh priests were deliberately giving a wrong interpretation to prove that all the ten Sikh gurus were in fact propagating the message of Jesus Christ. This is explained on pages 80–83 of Dr Dharmanant Singh's book. The Guru Singh Sabha published many tracts against the Arya Samaj but did nothing against the propagation of Christianity. So it is not correct to say that Guru Singh Sabha was formed because Dilip Singh had adopted Christianity.

4. Gurudom is a basic weakness of Sikhism. As long as there is this Guru throne and gurdwara property there would be gurus. This is proved by the domination of such leadership right from Guru Singh Sabha to Bhindranwale.

5. The popularising of Puran stories among Sikhs was done not by any Hindu but by Guru Gobind Singh himself. There is evidence of such stories even in Guru 'Granth Saheb'. As for adoption of Hindu way of life; when the Sikhs have originated from Hindus what other way of life would they adopt?

None of the ten Gurus prescribed any special festivals for the Sikhs. In fact till 200 years after the creation of *Khalsa Panth*, the Hindu–Sikh festivals were common and also common were their pilgrimage centres (temples, rivers and *Sarovars* etc.).

Behind the festivals started by Guru Singh Sabha there is no sanc-

tion of any Guru or a religious book. It is the result of the separatist cult started by the Guru Singh Sabha. Therefore it is wrong to say this Sabha came into being because the Sikhs were celebrating Hindu festivals. It came into being because the British wanted to destroy Hindu-Sikh amity.

6. The *Nirankari* and *Namdhari* movements did bring new life to Sikhism. But it was acceptable neither to Golden Temple nor the British that there should be a rival authority to Golden Temple, which was in the hands of the British. That is why the *Namdharis* were suppressed by the British and the Golden Temple is till today after the blood of the *Nirankaris*. The argument that Guru Singh Sabha came into being as these movements were dying down is again incorrect. Guru Singh Sabha was formed by the very people who incited the British against these movements.

7. Watching the power game of the *Udasi's*, *Nirmales*, *Akalis* and *Suthareshahis*, Swami Dayanand was right in concluding that tying up of the free thought of Nanak into a *Panth* had been a mistake. In the context of Muslim atrocities, he praised Nanak and Gobind Singh who succeeded with their own methods in maintaining the identity of the Hindus. He also found basis for the five Ks but he did not approve of making these an inseparable part of religion. He also criticised bowing before the book 'Guru Granth Saheb', worshipping and putting offerings before it. According to him this was no better than idol worship. These were sane views and cannot be termed a provocation for the formation of Guru Singh Sabha.

Guru Singh Sabha has been an inseparable part of the British policy to divide and rule. The facilities that it obtained within a few years of its origin and the urge for separatism that it gave birth to show that if the Sabha's aim was reformist, it was destructive also.

### **Singh Sabha aims**

In 1873 a conference was held in the Majithias area in Amritsar. The participants were Sir Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Kunwar Vikram Singh of Kapurthala, Giani Hazara Singh, Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia, Giani Sardool Singh, Giani Gyan Singh Amritsari and many other rich *Sardars*, priests, *Udasis*, *Nirmales* and some other sections of Sikh society. Under the Chairmanship of Thakar Singh Sandhawalia, a Guru Singh Sabha was formed with the following aims:

1. To promote Sikh religion.
2. To get books on Sikh religion and Sikh history written and published.

3. To promote Punjabi language and encourage publication of Punjabi literature, magazines and newspapers.
4. To bring round those who have fallen from Sikhism and turned heretics, those who are guilty of cutting their hair and have turned against the Sikh race. These will not be made members of the Guru Singh Sabha as long as they are on the wrong track.
5. High English officials can become members of the education wing of the Sabha but the other communities will not be admitted unless they prove that they are well-wishers of Sikh *dharma* and Punjabi language.
6. The Sabha will not say, hear or write against beliefs of others.
7. Nothing would be done against the government in the Singh Sabha.

Four years later, with the help of Prof Gurmukh Singh, another Singh Sabha was formed. In 1880 it was merged in the Amritsar Singh Sabha under the combined name of Shri Singh Sabha General. After this Singh Sabhas were formed at many places and the need arose for a central organisation. Ultimately in 1883 a Sikh Khalsa Dewan was formed. Prof Gurmukh Singh formed a separate Khalsa Dewan in Lahore.

The Khalsa Dewan of Amritsar was a body of moderates. It formed Gurmat Granth Pracharak Sabha, researched the important dates connected with the Gurus and got published books like 'Khalsa Tavarikh', 'Panth Prakash', 'Guru Granth Saheb Kosh' and 'Guru Tirtha Sangraha'. With the efforts of Raja Vikram Singh the translation of Guru Granth Saheb was also published by this Dewan. In 1894, a Khalsa Tract Society was formed which is still active.

The Khalsa Dewan of Lahore comprised extremists. Its main function was to set up *Khalsa* schools, girls schools, get gurdwaras repaired, conduct searches for lost gurdwaras, publish Gurmukhi newspapers, magazines, Khalsa Gazette, getting the Gurmukhi type prepared in 1887 and publishing 'Guru Granth Saheb'. Apart from this, the Dewan had in its fold powerful writers like Bhai Ditt Singh Giani, Prof Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha and Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid who wrote literatures aimed at dividing Hindus and Sikhs. Bhai Kahan Singh's 'We are not Hindus' was widely publicised. Ditt Singh wrote poisonously against Swami Dayanand and Arya Samaj. Prof Gurmukh Singh declared war on Hindu influences in Sikhism. Macauliffe's book 'Sikh Religion' was also made available by the help of this Dewan. Nanak's ancient 'Janamsakhi' was also published by this Dewan. In 1897 a committee was formed to correct Gurmat literature.

When the leading lights of these two Dewans died by 1902, the two Dewans combined to form Chief Khalsa Dewan which was at that time the only representative organisation of the Sikhs. Its achievements were Anand Marriage Act, Central Orphanage in Amritsar and Khalsa Propagation School, Taran Taran. Till 1919, Chief Khalsa Dewan remained a lackey of the British Government. In 1919, when Gen. Dyer, notorious for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, was presented a *saropa* by the manager of the Darbar Sahib, then ordinary Sikhs turned against the Chief Khalsa Dewan and became supporters of the Akali movement.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, was a different person but he was also with General Dyer who had killed the Sikhs not only on the day of massacre but during the seven weeks of agitation that followed, when many hundred died on the streets, fiftyone were hanged by the decision of summary courts, the jails were filled and thousands were flogged, made to crawl on their bellies or subjected to an assortment of indignities.

When General Dyer was given the ultimate accolade of a *Siropa* and proclaimed an honorary Sikh, the dialogue that is quoted in Mohinder Singh's 'The Akali movement' (Macmillan, 1978) is a classic example of a conversation between the fawning sychophant, for whom no humiliation is enough, and the master who, with an ironic smile, toys with the toady. This is the dialogue:

"Sahib, they said, 'you must become a sikh even as Nikalsiyan (a corruption of John Nicholson, the British hero of 1857) Sahib became Sikh.' The General (Dyer) thanked them for the honour, but he protested that he could not as a British Officer, let his hair grow long. Arur Singh laughed. 'We will let you off the long hair,' he said. General Dyer offered another objection. 'But I cannot give up smoking.' 'That you must do,' said Arur Singh. 'No,' said the General, 'I am very sorry, but I cannot give up smoking.' The priest conceded, 'we will let you give it up gradually.' 'That I promise you', said the General, 'at the rate of one cigarette a year'".

Studying the history of Guru Singh Sabha and Chief Khalsa Dewan we come to the conclusion that by flooding the Sikhs with literature, magazines, printing presses and school and colleges it transformed its mentality. The illusion for a separate identity increased among the Sikhs, a tendency to keep off Hindus was born and feeling of one *Panth*, one race and one nation sprouted among them.

## The Gift of Mutiny

In 1855 when the British organised the first census in India, the Sikhs were not counted separately. Many historians feel that if there had been no 'Mutiny' in 1857, the Sikh religion would have disappeared completely or would have survived as an ordinary gurdom. The 'Mutiny' came as a big boon to the Sikhs. It brought new life to Sikhism. After the 'Mutiny' the recruitment of Hindus into the Army was curtailed and uncontrolled recruitment of Sikhs took place. The result was that people of Punjab started keeping long hair and getting ordained into Sikhism. In the Army they were kept apart by all possible means and communal fanaticism was drilled into them. Thus the population of Hindus started decreasing and that of the Sikhs went up. In the census of 1868 the British counted Sikhs as different from the Hindus in order to divide the two communities. Punjab silently allowed these seeds of division to be sown. The following table shows how slowly the Hindu percentage went down in Punjab and the Sikh percentage got boosted:

Census year	Hindu percentage	Sikh percentage
1881	43.84	8.22
1891	44.08	8.09
1901	41.27	8.63
1911	35.79	12.11
1921	35.06	12.38
1931	30.18	14.29
1941	29.79	14.62



HE Akali Dal was formed mainly to free the gurdwaras from the hold of *Mahants* and the influence of the British.

By 1920 Sikhism had become synonymous with devotion to the British. Those with faith in original Sikh principles however could not accept this situation. To free Sikhism from the influence of both Hindus and the British these people in 1920 formed Akali Dal which was later called Shiromani Akali Dal. Many fierce agitations were held under its leadership.

The people who formed Akali Dal had in fact become active much earlier. In 1911 the British changed their Capital from Calcutta to Delhi. In 1914 under the Land Acquisition Act they acquired a part of gurudwara Rakabganj land and demolished its outer wall in order to construct a straight road to the Viceroy's house. The Sikhs started an agitation over this and the government had to retrace its step. In this first British-Sikh encounter, the Sikhs emerged victorious. This victory awakened political, Panthic and communal awareness among the Sikhs and for the first time the entire Sikh society got together on a single platform. Inspired by this, some extremist Sikhs started an agitation to free gurudwaras from the control of *Mahants*.

### Immoral Mahants

According to the 1903-04 report of Majha Khalsa Dewan, the Taran Taran gurudwara had become a centre of debauchery. It was common to see insults to women, hooliganism, drunken bouts during the Amavas festival, lewd songs and eve-teasing, and singing and dancing sessions outside *Darshani Dyodi*. Similar was the state of Nankana Sahib where three *Mahants* in succession — Sadhuram, Kishandas, Narayandas—turned out to be drunkards, meat eaters and debauches. By 1905 the Amritsar Darbar Sahib premises had become a stronghold of idol-worship whereas in Sikh religion, god-goddesses and idol-worship is forbidden. Sikh religion also opposes untouch-

ability but there was a board hanging in Darbar Sahib which said "No untouchable is allowed inside before 11 a.m." The Darbar Sahib manager Sunder Singh did not accept offerings from untouchables. In this very Darbar Sahib Gen. Dyer of Jallianwala Bagh massacre fame was presented a siropa which the Sikh people did not like. In 1906 visitors saw that the Muktsar gurdwara Mahant was enjoying a singing session in a drunken state. Mahant Mittha Singh of Panja Sahib gurdwara even had the gurudwara land registered in his name.

Sikh newspapers like 'Khalsa Samachar', 'Khalsa Advocate', 'Panth Sewak', 'The Khalsa', 'Loyal Gazette' etc. had been inspiring and rousing the Sikhs for years against this pitiable state. In May 1920, a daily called 'Akali' began publication from Lahore and put new spirit in the Sikhs. The office of 'Akali' became the centre of discussions and seminars for Sikh intellectuals and the wave for freeing the gurudwaras began here. In October 1920 in the Babe di Ber Gurudwara in Sialkot and in Jallianwala Bagh also the lower caste people were given Amrit and under the leadership of Kartar Singh Jhabbar, Teja Singh Chuharkana and Teja Singh Bhullar the Darbar Sahib and Akal Takht were freed from Mahants.

In 1919 a Sikh political party, Central Sikh League, and in April 1921 Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee, were registered. Gurudwara Panja Saheb (Rawalpindi) was taken over by the Sikhs in December 1920, gurudwara Taran Taran freed in January 1921 and gurudwara Naurangabad and Khajur Sahib in February 1921. In 1921-22 Nankana Sahib was freed. In 1921, the Darbar Saheb manager had given the Darbar Sahib keys to the British in order to prevent the Akalis from using the premises for political purposes. The Sikhs started a keys agitation and in 1922 the government returned the keys to them. In 1922 the influence of Mahants was ended in *Guru Ka Bagh*. In February 1923, the Muktsar gurudwara was freed and in March 1923, the Sikhs took control of the Anandpur Sahib gurudwara.

### **The Jaito agitation**

An anti-government agitation was started by the Akalis from September 1923 to July 1925. The Nabha king Ripudaman Singh (who had introduced the Anand Marriage Bill in the legislative council) was deposed at the instance of the king of Patiala. The Akalis sent about 20 *Jathas* (bands) from Amritsar in support of Ripudaman Singh. The gurudwara of Gangasar in Jaito (Nabha) was the centre of

the agitation. The British banned *Akhand Path* (continuous reading of the 'Granth Sahib') in Gangasar. In July 1925 the government removed this ban and the agitation was also withdrawn without achieving much.

In this agitation of 1920–25, more than 1000 Sikhs sacrificed their lives, about 60,000 were arrested and they paid fines amounting to lakhs. The agitations were a golden phase for the Sikhs as the successes here gave them a basis for a bright future, but these also dealt a big blow to the social and religious unity of Punjab. Bitterness, hatred, malice and enmity spread in Punjab.

This agitation of the Sikhs was against the *Mahants* and the Government but it turned against the Hindus and other groups as well. The throwing of idols from the Golden Temple created bitterness with the Hindus who started taking the side of *Mahants*. When in 1921 in Lahore, the Sikhs mounted an offensive to secure the release of Nankana Saheb, the Mahants called a 'Sanatani Sikh conference' under the leadership of Kartar Singh Bedi in which Bedis, Bhallas, Sodhis, Udasis, Nirmales, Namdharis, Nihangs, Suthres, Nirankaris, Sahajdharis, Mahants and priests participated. They started a weekly newspaper from Lahore which spouted venom against the Akali agitation in the same way as the Sikh newspapers were doing. As a result, Nankana Sahib, which was a symbol of love, became red with the blood of human beings.

When in March 1921 Mahatma Gandhi and Shaukat Ali went to Nankana Sahib, the Sikhs termed the event an atrocity of the *Mahants* and the government and worse than the Jallianwala massacre. The Sikhs complained that while the national leaders condemned the murder of Sikhs in Nankana Sahib, the Arya Samaji papers like 'Pratap' and 'Kesari' were spreading tales that there was a *Shivlinga* installed in Nankana Sahib. It cannot be said whether this was true or not but it is a fact that just as many Hindu temples were converted into mosques by the Muslims in the same way many temples were changed into gurudwaras. Gandhiji never approved of the Sikh practice of forcibly occupying gurudwaras. The Sikhs that died in Nankana Sahib were never considered martyrs by Gandhiji. Lala Lajpat Rai had also condemned the use of force by the Sikhs. When on 8 March 1922 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya laid the foundation stone of Durgyana Mandir on the lines of the Darbar Sahib, then this was called a move to separate Hindus from Sikhs ('Shiromani Akali Dal', page 78).

## Gurudwara Act, 1925

The Akalis had started the agitation to seize gurudwaras from *Mahants* in order to establish themselves as a political power. After this agitation the Akali Dal became a special centre of power in Punjab. Later history also proves that whenever Akalis felt the need to consolidate their power, they raised the slogan of '*Panth* in danger' and started some or the other agitation to acquire new life.

The 1920-25 agitation brought for them the Gurudwara Act 1925 which became the strongest basis for their political power. With this law Sikh *Panth* acquired the stature of a State within a State. Confirming this, Harjinder Singh Dilgir writes:

'Many Sikh leaders had opposed the Gurudwara Act at that time. But they did not realise that with this Act their power had become organised. It gave a big boost to Shiromani Akali Dal which otherwise would have lost its entity in this hour of crisis. The Sikhs achieved a status of half state or a State within a State through this Act.' (Dilgir: 'Shiromani Akali Dal').

The Gurudwara Act was a result of long, untiring efforts. After the massacre of Nankana Sahib, need was felt for such a measure. On 14 March 1921, Miyan Fazal Hussain introduced a resolution in the Punjab Council to the effect that the Governor General should introduce an ordinance to resolve the gurudwara disputes and their proper management and until an Act is passed the government should appoint a committee of three members to run the controversial gurudwaras. The resolution was passed in spite of the opposition of the Sikh members. In April 1921 Fazal Hussain introduced this resolution in the form of a Bill in the Council which entrusted it to a select committee. The Sikh members of the committee opposed it here also and got the following assurances approved (1) only a *Mahant* of good character should be allowed in the gurudwara (2) a Panthic committee should be formed for management and (3) an account of income and expenditure should be given to the public. But the *Mahants* demanded that the situation of 1920 should be maintained and the manager should be a European and not a Sikh. As a result the conference failed.

In November 1922, once again Fazal Hussain introduced the Bill in the Punjab Council. There were five Sikhs in the committee but all of them resigned thus killing the Bill before it could take off.

In November 1924 a third effort was made and after ceaseless efforts in January 1925, it was ready in a proper shape. Under this Act a list was prepared of 64 controversial gurudwaras in Eastern Punjab

and 177 in western Punjab. There was another list of 116 Sadhu abodes or camps but these were not considered gurudwaras. According to the Act any 50 Sikhs could ask for a committee to manage the gurudwaras. Gurudwara elections were prescribed and right of vote was given to women also. There were disputes within the SGPC over this Act but considering its need at the time, it was accepted. The SGPC wanted that the Akal Takht and Keshgarh should also be under its control and the gurudwara income should be spent on religious activity, education and donations.

The history of the Gurudwara Act shows that the Sikhs, who liked to take over control of gurudwaras by force, did not consider any law could be favourable to them. They believed only in fighting and agitations and that is why they kept obstructing the Bill. After much agitation against their illegal activities, at last, they accepted it.

### **Again in the British Lap**

With the Gurudwara Act coming into force the *Akali* agitations died down. The agitations removed the label of British-devotees that had stuck to them. As a result, in the Punjab Frontier and Kashmir Army, their percentage of 19.2 out of 47 per cent was in 1930 reduced to 13.58 per cent. On the other hand the percentage of Muslim troops, which was 11.1 per cent, was raised to 22.2 per cent in 1930. As a consequence of the efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and other British flunkey Muslim leaders, the British forgot the Muslim role in the Mutiny of 1857. After the gurudwara agitation the tension between the Sikhs and the British had increased but the Sikh leaders were still thinking of ways to please the British.

As luck would have it, just like the boon of Mutiny, came the Second World War for the Sikhs. In this hour of crisis the British needed loyal and brave soldiers. The Sikh leaders were also worried at British ire. So both found need for each other. Under the chairmanship of the Maharaja of Patiala, a Khalsa Defence League was formed whose job was to enlist as many sacrificial goats as possible for the British. The secret behind the League name was that in the defence of the British was the defence of *Khalsa*. The League did great propaganda in Punjab and soon recruited more troops than had been targeted. As a reward, the government gave the Sikhs the post of a judge in the High Court and a place in the Viceroy Council.

## Battlecry for Khalistan

When in June 1926, under the Gurudwara Act, elections for the 'Central Board' (later called SGPC) were held, then instead of the pro-British Mehtab Singh party, the group of Master Tara Singh came into majority. Ever since Akali Dal has maintained control over SGPC. For this reason Akali Dal has been considered the representative of Sikh religious and political aspirations and has been using gurudwara property for political purposes. On the basis of this power Akali Dal blew the bugle of Khalistan at a time when the percentage of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others in Punjab was respectively 55: 30: 13: 2. This 13 per cent Sikhs were also spread out from Patiala to Rawalpindi. With the demand for Khalistan, the Akalis presented their real face to the country.

Although the Muslim League formally raised the demand for Pakistan at the Lahore conference only in 1940, signs of such a claim were available even in 1929 when at the Muslim Conference Sir Mohammad Iqbal asked for removal of Ambala division and some other districts from Punjab. If this had been accepted, the percentage of Muslims in Punjab would have increased to more than 63 per cent. Hindus and Sikhs strongly opposed the demand for Pakistan in Punjab. But Ludhiana's Dr Vir Singh Bhatti vitiated the atmosphere by bringing out a pamphlet regarding Khalistan.

The pamphlet demanded that Khalistan be created by including the States of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Kalsia and Malerkotla and the districts of Simla, Jalandhar, Ambala, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Lahore, Lyallpur, Gujranwala, Shekhupura, Montgomery, Hissar, Rohtak and Karnal. It wanted a mixed government under the Maharaja of Patiala. In May 1940, 125 Sikhs gathered under the leadership of Baba Gurdit Singh and demanded that the area from Jammu to Jamrood, which the British had taken from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's successor Dilip Singh as a trustee, should be returned to the Sikhs so that a *Guru Khalsa Raj* could be set up.

At this time two events took place which increased the interest of Sikhs towards Khalistan. One was in August 1940 when Rajagopal-achari suggested that the Muslims appoint their own Prime Minister and form a communal government. Another was that Sir Stafford Cripps wanted to establish the boundaries of Punjab in such a way that no community could have a majority. But he failed. This created a suspicion in the Sikh minds that they had no voice at the Centre and that their identity was in danger between Hindus and Muslims in Punjab.

In December 1943, the Singh National College (started by Akali Dal) issued a declaration about free Punjab. Master Tara Singh gave it his support. He was severely criticized but in spite of it, in June 1943 the Shiromani Akali Dal passed a resolution in favour of free Punjab. The 'Panja Saheb Sikh political conference' in August 1943 also gave it its stamp of approval. Earlier, in February 1943, the Central Akali Dal working committee had opposed this demand and called Jinnah and Tara Singh agents of Capitalists who were dancing to the tune of Cripps. In January 1944 the Akalis in their Delhi conference also supported this demand. During this time elections were held for the Sikh seat of Peshawar and Master Tara Singh's candidate, who had raised the issue of Khallistan, was defeated at the hands of the Congress candidate. Following this Master Tara Singh resigned from the Akali Dal and SGPC and escaped to an unknown place. But he could not remain long in hiding and in June, on his birthday, he jumped back into the political arena.

On 5 August 1944, Jinnah lured the Sikhs with an offer that he was prepared to discuss their demands. In the same month Master Tara Singh called a conference of all Sikhs where Rajaji's plan was criticised and the demand for Khalistan was supported. According to the Rajaji plan, 16 districts of Punjab were to go to Pakistan and 12 remain in India. In these 16 districts there was a good population of Sikhs and they also had a lot of property and gurudwaras. On 3 September 1944 a protest day was observed at the call of Akali Dal in which it was said that Gandhi and Jinnah were dividing the country and Sikh rights were being ignored. In October 1944 Master Tara Singh told the Sikhs that the *Panth* faced a threat from Communists, the British, Gandhi and Jinnah. In November 1944 two representatives of the Sikhs met Jinnah in Delhi. Jinnah advised them not to oppose Pakistan whose formation was inevitable. In exchange, he asked them to raise the demand for independent Khalistan. In the same month, the Akali silver jubilee conference was held in Jandiala (Amritsar) in which two lakh Sikhs took part. In this conference it was decided to strongly oppose the demand for Pakistan and thus Jinnah's ploy failed.

In March 1944 the Muslim League Conference decided to resort to direct action. Sir Feroz Khan Noon declared that they did not believe in non-violence and that they would have to adopt some such steps which would shame even Halaku and Changez Khan. Immediately after this the massacre of Hindus began in the united Bengal of Suhrawardy. The Punjab Chief Minister, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, who was proving a hurdle for the Muslim Leaguers, died at this time.

The new Chief Minister was Khijar Hyat Khan Tiwana who was considered a meek ruler. The Muslim Leaguers demonstrated everyday before him and started abusing him. The Muslim League became the most effective party of Punjab and this was a danger common to both Hindus and Sikhs.

### Change of Stance

The situation was not in favour of the Sikhs. Because of the Sikhs in the Congress, so far Akali Dal had been demanding a Khalistan within India. Now, being disappointed with the Congress, it started saying "we oppose Pakistan but if Pakistan is formed we also should be given a Sikh homeland outside India." Meanwhile Giani Kartar Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh continued to raise the demand for Khalistan at the administrative level. On 2 March 1947, Master Tara Singh marched to the Assembly Hall alongwith his followers, and taking his sword out of the scabbard, announced that they would not let the Muslim League function. But only a few days earlier Master Tara Singh had permitted Sardar Ajit Singh to join the Muslim League Cabinet of Frontier Province. Hindu-Sikh students responded jointly to Masterji's call. They took out a procession in Lahore raising anti-Muslim League slogans. A special meeting was held in the grounds of D.A.V. College, Lahore where, among others, Giani Kartar Singh and Udham Singh Nagoke spoke.

Master Tara Singh now turned completely against the Congress and started looking to the British government and Jinnah. In July 1947, the British government had decided that India should be divided into Pakistan and Sikhistan also, but it seems gauging the opinion within Muslim League, Jinnah rejected this scheme. With Sikhistan dreams evaporating, Masterji pleaded with Jinnah to accept a 'Sikh homeland' within Pakistan. But Jinnah was not prepared for this. Perhaps the reason was the past hostilities which the two sides were not prepared to forget.

Annoyed, Master Tara Singh and other Akali leaders started abusing national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. When Nehru said Master Tara Singh wanted to sit simultaneously on 15 stools, then Masterji replied that for the independence of the Sikhs, if he had to talk to Jinnah he did not have to seek Nehru's permission for it. Sikh leaders openly accused Gandhi and Jinnah of cruelty and cheating.

The dream of Khalistan remained unfulfilled but the bitterness and distrust between Hindus and Sikhs increased. The argument for Khalistan was that the Sikhs are a separate race and nation and to

"It would have been better if the system of elections on communal basis had ended, but under the circumstances the solution evolved by Motilal and his colleagues is the best." (Tribune, 22 August 1928)

The Akalis remained adamant on the demand that as long as 30 per cent seats were not reserved for them, they would not accept the Nehru report. On the other hand Jinnah complicated the situation further by saying that according to their population, the Muslims should get 56 percent seats in Punjab and 33 percent at the Centre.

A committee was formed to discuss the demands of Muslims and Sikhs. Among those participating were Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mahatma Gandhi, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Malik Barkat Ali, Maulana Abdul Kadir, Maulana Azad, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Master Tara Singh, Mehtab Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Harnam Singh Advocate and Mangal Singh. Except for Gandhi and Sapru, no other member was prepared to accept the Muslim demands. Jinnah took an unsympathetic view of the Sikh demands and on 28 December 1928, walked out of the meeting of the sub-committee. The next day Jinnah attended and gave many baseless arguments for his demands which it was not possible to accept. Harnam Singh advocate read out a joint statement on behalf of the Sikhs and walked out shouting the slogan, *Sat Sri Akal*. While walking out Mehtab Singh said addressing Gandhiji:

"If you do not listen to the Sikhs, the country's division will not take place through the pen sitting in Calcutta but by the sword." (Akali Te Pardesi 31 December 1928).

In this atmosphere Teja Singh Chuharkana is said to have angrily abused even Motilal Nehru and Dr Ansari.

Communal frenzy at that time was at its peak and neither Hindus, Muslims nor Sikhs were prepared to give it up. For the sake of freedom, the Congress had accepted in the Lucknow Pact elections on communal basis in order to appease the Muslims. But the Muslims considered this policy of appeasement their victory and a defeat for the Congress. The Congress took the Lucknow Pact as a document of communal amity whereas the Muslim Leaguers encashed it in favour of the demand for Pakistan. There was no political group at that time in which British agents had not infiltrated.

### **Civil Disobedience Movement**

In April 1930 a meeting of Congress, Akali Dal, Muslims, Young India Conference and other independent groups was held to discuss participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31). To plan

its success a panel was formed comprising Maulana Abdul Qadir (President Punjab Congress), Dr Satyapal, K. Santhanam, Tara Singh, Baba Khadag Singh and Lala Chhabil Das. Later Dr Saifuddin Kitchloo and Dr Mohammad Ali also joined it. But suddenly Baba Khadag Singh created a problem saying the Sikhs would not take part in the Disobedience Movement unless the colour of the Sikhs was introduced in the Congress flag. This was the *Akalis'* unique way of blackmailing the Congress. But neither Khadag Singh nor Tara Singh were willing to guarantee that the Akali Dal would merge into the Congress if this colour was introduced into the flag.

The Shiromani Akali Dal, while supporting Khadag Singh's demand, found a via media. It announced that it would take part in the struggle under its own flag, and not under the flag of the Congress. Master Tara Singh said that in spite of the assurance of Mahatma Gandhi, the Sikh colour has not been introduced in the flag. There is resentment among the Sikhs because of it. Jawaharlal Nehru and K. Santhanam had clarified in their letters:

"The Congress had decided on the flag unanimously and its colours do not represent different religions. If the provincial Congress and others pass such resolutions then there would be dozens of different flags." (Tribune, 2 Nov 1930)

Explaining his stand, Master Singh said,

"If the Sikhs do not take part in the Disobedience Movement, and this experiment of Gandhi succeeds, then the Sikhs would have no place in it and if it fails the Sikhs would be blamed for the failure. Therefore the Sikhs should take part in the movement under their own flag. (Tribune, 15 April 1930)

But in spite of this Baba Khadag Singh and most of the *Akalis* stayed away from the disobedience movement. But when in May 1930 the English police fired at Gurdwara Sisganj, and the news of 686 bullets embedded in the walls of the gurdwara reached Punjab then the provoked Sikhs, ignoring their leaders, took a major part in the Disobedience Movement.

## Charter of Demands

On 5 March, 1931, under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Congress agreed to take part in the Second Round Table Conference where a new constitution for India was to be discussed. The Akali Dal selected Master Tara Singh as its representative but when Giani Sher Singh issued statements against this conference, the British Government

maintain their identity, a free nation of their own was their first requirement. Our *Panth* and culture will be crushed under the slavery of Hindus. Such extremist views filled the Hindu minds also with repugnance towards the Sikhs.

**T**HE way the religious and social resurgence of the Sikhs was shaping, the emergence of communal politics was inevitable. It was not difficult for a national organisation like the Congress to tackle such religious politics, but faced with Muslim communalism, which was being fanned by the crafty British, Congress efforts were meeting with no success. The *Akalis* were also in a dilemma. Sometimes they were with the Congress and sometimes against it. They could never honestly join the national mainstream as they had their feet simultaneously in two boats. They kept alive the argument that they opposed Pakistan, but if it was conceded, then their demand for Khalistan also stands.

### Religious Politics

According to the *Statesman* (31 Dec 1932) the Aga Khan, Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Dr Shafat Ahmed Khan took part in a meeting of the House of Commons. They said:

"No Hindu-Muslim unity is possible in the political, social or any other field. Nobody but the British can rule India."

On 29 May, 1933 the Punjab Youth League said in a public statement:

"The time has come when there is need not so much for Hindu-Muslim unity as for Hindu-British unity. The Hindu leaders should see that in the Constitution and in the Cabinet the interests of Hindus are protected."

In the same year, Hindu Mahasabha president Bhai Parmanand scoffed at the idea that Hindu-Muslim unity was a condition for independence. The Hindu Mahasabha had disagreed with the complete independence proposal with this condition and was in favour of accepting the Simon Commission proposals. For this reason top leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya left the Maha-

sabha and staunchly opposed the Simon Commission. The Muslim League of Punjab was welcoming the Simon Commission.

### **The Second Round Table Conference**

It is a mystery how even after the call for complete independence this kind of narrow interests kept gaining ground. National interests were forgotten and communal demands were voiced loudly. The result was that when with dreams of independence in his mind, Gandhiji reached England for the second round table conference, the British government, instead of discussing the granting of freedom to India, presented the communal problem as the main issue before the conference. By raising the issue of a federal arrangement between the Indian States and the British government, they had even Gandhiji bewildered. A sub-committee was formed comprising Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, Muslim Conference and communal organisations in order to solve the communal problems. Gandhiji represented the Congress in the committee. Its chairman was Macdonald. British India was represented by the Aga Khan, who was a strong pillar of Muslim revivalism but was not even a citizen of India. Since the sub-committee was a crowd of communalists, the issue of freedom was pushed back. Each member campaigned for more facilities for his own group and for reducing the facilities of the other group.

The presence of the British Prime Minister complicated matters even further as he went on offering facilities to one group at the cost of the other. Gandhiji repeatedly reminded these leaders to beware of the English conspiracy but they seemed to react only to British signals like a trained horse. The result was that the round table conference failed to evolve solutions for either political or communal problems. The British tactic was to reject the demand for complete freedom under the smokescreen of communal problems. The sub-committee sent its report to the conference that it could come to no conclusions. Ultimately, according to a well-thought out plan, the British Prime Minister announced a communal award which only increased political rivalry and communal politics in India.

### **Baseless Argument**

In this atmosphere the Akalis could not be expected to adopt strongly the nationalist point of view. Although they welcomed the call for complete independence and took significant part in the 1930-31 Civil Disobedience Movement, still they were not prepared to give up

their communal demands. When in 1926 the Congress appealed for the boycott of the Simon Commission, then in January 1928, the Akali Dal working committee also decided to boycott it. In the same month a meeting was held in the Jallianwala Bagh in which Master Tara Singh, Hira Singh Dard, Dr Kitchloo, Dr Satyapal and Maulana Jafar Ali Khan called for the boycott of the Simon Commission. But all the achievement of this Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity came to naught when on 29 January 1928 the All India Sikh Conference called by the Akali Dal passed the following resolution: Elections on the basis of communal groups are harmful for the nation but because the Congress and the Muslim League have accepted it, the Sikhs feel that they should be given one-third seats and the same proportion in the administration also. The Sikhs will under no circumstances live under a majority elected on the basis of communal representation. The Madras Congress resolution regarding one-fifth Hindu-Muslim rights should be applied to Sikhs also. Interests of minority Sikhs in Sindh and Frontier Province must be projected." ('Akali Te Pardesi', January 1928)

It is to be remembered that Sikhs had earlier vowed at the *samadhi* (tomb) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that they would sacrifice their all to have the communal award set aside but the enterprise remained still-born mainly because the largest political organisation of the country adopted a policy of neutrality towards the award and allowed Mr. Jinnah's resolution approving of the award in the Central Assembly to be passed without any opposition.

On 24 January 1928 the Sikhs gathered in Rajasansi (Amritsar) and formed an organisation called 'Central Sikh Association'. It passed a resolution saying:

"We hold a large volume of land in this province and pay more than one-third of its revenue. Our military record in British history is unparalleled. Therefore our claim to special privileges is just. Our sacrifices for and loyalty to the country prove this."  
(Tribune, 25 January 1928)

This organisation also demanded a share in the Central and provincial Cabinets and also a Sikh in the Viceroy Council. (Akali Patrika; 27 January 1928).

## **The British Challenge**

In January 1928 Britain's Minister for India challenged India's politicians that they could not resolve the question of communalism in India. Accepting this challenge, an all-party conference was called in

Delhi on February 1928 in which Congress, Muslim League, Liberal Federation, Sikh League (Akali Dal's previous name), Hindu Mahasabha and representatives of Indian States participated. This conference accepted that in deciding representation for Punjab, special care should be taken of the rights of minority Sikhs. In March 1928 the Dal General Secretary wired Congress president Dr Ansari saying:

"Sikhs will not accept any communal majority nor will they accept communal representation on the basis of numbers. The Sikhs are in a minority, still they are prepared to offer sacrifices to fight communal representation. But if the Congress accepts communal representation, then the Sikhs demand one third representation" (Tribune, 29 March 1928).

This demand of the Akalis had been accepted earlier in the Madras Congress itself. But giving priority to national interests, the Motilal Nehru Committee of 1928 (comprising Sardar Mangal Singh, Subash Chandra Bose, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.S.Ane, Ali Imam, Sahib Qureshi and G.R. Prasad) in its report decided that there would be no reserved seats for any community in Punjab and Bengal.

### **Nehru Report Opposed**

The Akalis termed this decision as betrayal of the Sikhs. Sardar Mangal Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose were also members of the committee but they did not express such sentiments on behalf of Punjab or Bengal. The Akalis found this formula unacceptable because Hindu minorities of Sindh and Frontier Province and Muslim minorities of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bombay and Madras had been given reservation of seats but Sikh minorities of Punjab had been ignored. Although the Hindus were also in a minority in Punjab and had been denied reserved seats but it was the Sikhs only who expressed their annoyance. There is no doubt that the Congress took many wrong decisions like appeasing the Muslims for which it had to pay later in the form of partition of the country. But if the Akalis had even a little nationalist feeling they would have accepted this as a bitter pill and would have tried to appreciate that when their number was only 13 percent they could not claim one-third representation.

Master Tara Singh was the greatest supporter of Congress among the Sikhs. But after the Nehru report he became a bitter enemy of the Congress. It also brought dissensions within the Akali Dal. Mangal Singh, Sardul Singh Kavishvar, Hira Singh Dard, Samukh Singh Jhaval, Baba Gurdit Singh (of Kamagatamaru fame) and Giani Kartar Singh supported the Nehru report. They said,

selected two other Sikh leaders in their place. Angered by this the Akalis pressed Gandhiji not to attend the conference. Pratap Singh Kairon sent him a telegram saying his participation at this stage would be considered a betrayal of the Sikhs. But against national interests, the Congress gave no importance to this objection. On 20 March, 1931, different Sikh party representatives met Gandhiji. This deputation gave a charter of 17 demands to him. The demands listed in the charter and the demands that Longowal placed before the government in independent India have so much similarity that the Sikh mentality can be recognised in it for all times. The demands in the charter were the following:

1. The Sikhs oppose communal representation.
2. Because of their important status in Punjab, the Sikhs should get 30 percent seats in Punjab Council and in the administration.
3. The Sikhs should get one-third share in the Punjab Cabinet and the Public Service Commission.
4. In case the above conditions are not met, then the Muslim majority areas should be merged in Frontier Province to create communal balance.
5. If none of the above demands can be met, then until a satisfactory solution is found, the Central Government should administer Punjab.
6. The official language of Punjab should be Punjabi and the Sikhs should have the freedom to write Punjabi in Gurmukhi or any other script.
7. The Sikhs should get 5 percent seats in each Central legislature.
8. There should always be a Sikh minister in the Central Cabinet.
9. Whenever a military council is formed, the Sikhs must get representation in it.
10. The Sikhs have played a significant role in the Army, therefore the Sikh share in Army should be maintained as before the war.
11. The Sikhs should get representation in the Union and provincial service commissions.
12. All other administrative powers should be vested in the Central government.
13. The Central government should be given special powers to protect the minorities.

14. The Sikhs should be provided facilities like other minorities in other States.
15. The Provincial and Central governments should be secular and the religious institutions of the time must be protected.
16. Special arrangements should be made for teaching Gurmukhi.
17. No amendment should be made in the proposed Constitution without consulting the Sikhs.

### **The Communal Award**

The Second Round Table Conference had failed. In August 1932 the British Prime Minister announced the communal award according to which, of the 175 seats in Punjab, the Muslims were given 86, Hindus 43, Sikhs 32, Christians 2, Landlords 5, labourers 3 and one each to Anglo-Indians, Europeans, traders and universities. This meant that the Muslims got two seats more and the Hindus and Sikhs one seat each more than the situation that existed before. The Akalis, who had been singing all the time about 30 percent seats, naturally were not satisfied and raised their voice against the Award. The Muslims were also unhappy as they had not received a majority under it. As a result in December 1932 a Third Round Table Conference was held and in March 1933 the British government brought out a White Paper according to which the division of seats was revised so as to give a clear majority to the Muslims, that is they were given 84 seats. The Hindus, who had been given 43 seats, had these now reduced to 34 by giving eight of their seats to Harijans. The Sikhs received one seat less. The labourers also had one seat reduced.

How could this White Paper be acceptable to the Akalis who dreamed of 30 percent? They were about to start a crusade against the White Paper when Giani Sher Singh launched his own holy war against Master Tara Singh. He alleged that Master Tara Singh had defied the decision to keep the Khalsa Darbar free of party politics and had misled it into narrow party interests thus endangering panthic unity.

“Khalsa Darbar has contracted into the hands of Master Tara Singh and his supporters”. (Dilgir: ‘Shiromani Akali Dal’).

This event created a rift among the Akalis and their resentment against the White Paper gradually cooled.

The 17 demands and the excitement that their non-acceptance created in the Sikh society prove how insistent the Sikhs were towards their demands. The 17 demands also prove that the Sikhs had no

interest in national problems. They were worried only about Punjab and in Punjab also, about their own *Panth*. This absence of nationalist point of view continues in the same vein today even after 50 years. In this charter there was only one demand which had national significance, and that was regarding secular governments in the provinces and at the Centre. But we find that the Sikhs address India's secular government as 'Hindu government'. Their standard of secularism must indeed be different.

In order to maintain their identity, the *Akalis* have, ever since the British times, been nurturing this self-centred stratagem. There never was any tendency in them to respect the majority. If they had any feeling of respect towards the majority, they would have lived with amity with Muslims and Hindus and then, in spite of British efforts, Punjab would not have been partitioned. The *Akali* adamancy and their provocative speeches played a decisive role in filling the atmosphere of Punjab with the poison of communalism. The real issue at that time was how to attain the independence for which a vow had been taken at the banks of Ravi. But these 17 demands clearly show that the *Akalis* were not interested in independence.

### **The Akali Rift**

The period 1929–36 is notorious in Sikh history for internal strife. The two main leaders at that time were Baba Khadag Singh and Master Tara Singh. The differences between the two went on increasing over issues like Gurdwara elections of 1930, Sikhs' colour in the Congress flag, to support or not to support Congress, the *Dhamka Morcha*, Khalsa Darbar and declaring of Baba Khadag Singh as dictator. To strengthen their own side they wooed supporters and as a result Sikh organisations like SGPC, Akali Dal, Khalsa Darbar, Sikh League, Central Akali Dal, Sikh National Conference and many other such organisations started becoming weak from within. To save Sikh society from this suicidal dissension, an organisation of neutral Sikh scholars called Gursevak Sabha was formed. But it also failed in its efforts.

In June 1935, Amrit Kaur of Bombay decided to go on fast unto death for panthic unity but she was persuaded against this course. Giani Sher Singh proposed mediation by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya but Master Tara Singh rejected this offer saying they could not leave Panthic decisions to any outsider. Because of this rift, the Sikh leadership could take no significant part in the freedom struggle.

Sikh historians feel the British were behind this rift in Sikh leader-

ship. One example should suffice. In March 1931 a committee was formed under the leadership of Nehru having as its members Master Tara Singh and two others. The committee in order to remove the Sikhs' complaint, decided to introduce saffron colour into the Congress flag. But Baba Khadag Singh objected to this and said the Sikh colour was not saffron; it was yellow or black. So only these colours should be allowed. Earlier Baba Khadag Singh had proposed co-operating with the Congress but his proposal was defeated by 9 to 7 votes in the Akali Dal working Committee in November 1930. Was Baba Khadag Singh in league with the British or was he surrounded by agents of the British?

### **Gurdwara Shahid Ganj**

In 1935, a controversy arose in Punjab which enveloped the entire province in the fire of communalism. Gurdwara Shahid Ganj of Lahore was built in the 18th century in memory of Sikh women martyred due to the atrocities of Mir Mannu. The weak walls of the gurdwara built in the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were demolished but as the new walls were being raised the Muslims raised an objection that there was a mosque inside the gurdwara and they would not permit any insult to it. The case went to the High Court and the judgement was in favour of the Sikhs. This provoked the Muslims. While the Sikhs were demolishing the walls, the Muslims started sending *jathas* to the gurdwara. Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari counselled the Muslims not to get unduly excited as they had hundreds of mosques already. But poisonous religious sermons started emanating from the Shahi Masjid of Lahore and the incited Muslims clashed with the police at Dilli Darwaja and Akbari Darwaja resulting in 10 deaths. Seeing the worsening situation, Shiromani Akali Dal took the issue of Gurdwara Shahid Ganj in its own hands. Some wise Sikhs and Muslims intervened to cool tempers but in September 1935 the poisonous speeches resumed and Mir Saheb threatened to raise a Muslim force of 10 lakh. Jinnah also tried to intervene but Master Tara Singh said there could be no settlement.

Sensing threat to peace, the government banned the carrying of swords. In June 1936 the *Nihangs* and Muslims clashed in the *Ghee Mandi* of Amritsar. In April 1937, the Muslims attacked the Kot Bhai Than Singh gurdwara near Rawalpindi and also, the Sikh Dewan in Ala village of Gujarat. Ultimately the matter was resolved in the court but its effects continued for a long time preventing the united Sikh-Muslim fight for freedom. Much of the energy of the Sikhs was wasted

in these fights of little value and it harmed the freedom movement in Punjab.

On July 3, 1936, Master Tara Singh Said:

"The Congress cannot be trusted because it hesitated in supporting the Sikhs on a delicate issue like the Shahid Ganj Gurdwara. Even if the Muslims attack the Darbar Saheb, the Congress would remain neutral and would not condemn the massacre of the Sikhs. I am an opponent of that Congress which is under the influence, of the Muslims. Until the Congress is freed from the influence, my struggle against it would continue. Despite all this, if the Congress starts the movement for the freedom of the country, I'll be in the forefront of that struggle". Irritated by this speech, a nationalist Sikh Hira Singh Dard christened Masterji as 'Our Aurangzeb'. (Tribune, 5 July, 1938).

In 1937, elections were to be held on the basis of the Communal Award. An all-party Sikh conference was called in August 1936 in which Gopal Singh Kaumi said,

"The importance of Sikhs will increase if we co-operate with the Congress, therefore we must accept Congress tickets."

At this Giani Sher Singh said:

"This conference is related to Sikh issues and not to the Congress."

But this situation did not last long and in November 1936, the Akali Dal and the Congress came to an agreement. ('Akali Patrika' 18 Nov, 1936). The Congress and the Akali Dal fought the 1937 election together. Before this Master Tara Singh was sent as a delegate to the All-India Congress. This Congress-Sikh unity at that time was so great that in the All-India Conference of Akali Dal in Nov 1938 Baldev Singh went to the extent of saying:

"After Vahe Guru and the Gurus, I give importance to the Congress. I say this not out of political reasons but because I consider the Congress as the only group worthy of our national pride and self-respect." (Udham Singh Nagoke; 'Sikh Dharma Te Moujuda Rajneeti', page 34)

As a result of this Congress-Sikh unity, to a certain extent the Sikhs' communal adamancy started melting; a national outlook began to

emerge in them and they began to feel that service to the country was not possible in the narrow confines of the Akali Dal. The Congress was the right forum for such activity. An interesting fact comes to light. Of the 24 Sikh seats in 1937, 14 were to be contested by Akali Dal and 10 by Sikhs of the Congress. Important names among the 14 mem-

bers of the Akali Dal were: Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh, Pratap Singh Kairon, Giani Kartar Singh, Kapur Singh, Narottam Singh, etc. Most of them later joined the Congress. In independent India some of them became Chief Ministers of Punjab, country's Defence and Foreign Ministers. This proves that the enlightened Sikhs (whom the Akali Dal had given a base) were suffocating in the confines of the Panthic party and their nationalist feelings were striving for an outlet. This situation would not have arisen if the Akali Dal had been a purely nationalist body. The Akali Dal cooperated with the Congress later also but this was a result of political exigencies and not because of any interest in nationalistic causes. This character of the Akali Dal became apparent when the Second World War broke out.

### **The War and After**

With the Second World War breaking out in Europe, Britain needed mercenaries who could give their lives on the battlefield to defend the British side. The Congress having sounded the bugle of complete independence, little help was expected from it in this hour of their crisis. With great cunning, therefore, they started infiltrating into groups who could, with a little temptation, serve British interests. Punjab was a famous market for brave soldiers. So the British played their first drama there itself. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was the Chief Minister of Punjab at that time. He was under the influence of the British. He introduced a resolution in Punjab Assembly for helping the British in this crucial time of war. It was carried by 104 to 39 votes. This resolution demanded that after the war the British government should announce dominion status for the country and a scheme for the protection of minorities. In October, a Sikh public meeting was held in Amritsar under the presidentship of Master Tara Singh in which

a resolution was passed listing conditions under which the Sikhs would help the British:

1. The Sikhs should be given a larger share in the Army.
2. A Sikh should be represented on the Viceroy Council, and
3. In services adequate representation should be given to the Sikhs ('Akali Patrika', 2 October, 1940)

Helping the British was an unfortunate decision of the Akalis as the party with which they were coordinating had already announced non-cooperation with the British in the war. On the other hand a group of pro-government Sikhs met the Maharaja of Patiala and keeping in mind the facilities obtained at the time of the Mutiny, suggested to him

that full use must be made of this occasion too. When the Akali Dal came to know of this, it called an all-party Sikh conference and the Sikh leaders formed a 'Khalsa Defence League' whose job was to form soldier boards which would enlist as many Sikhs into the British army as possible. In this "good work" they did not want to lag behind the Muslims. Watching this self-interest of the Muslims and the Sikhs, some Hindu leaders like Gokul Chand Narang, Raja Narendra Nath and Bhai Parmanand etc. encouraged the Hindus also to co-operate with the British.

On 5 July, 1940 the Akali Dal Working Committee held a secret meeting to discuss the issues concerning the war, in which a majority of the Akali leaders were in favour of helping the government. Major Short and John Bull were meeting the Akali leaders frequently and trying to win them over. The Akalis wanted that the government should be helped with an eye on benefits for the Sikhs and a large share in the Army. Maulana Azad bitterly criticized Master Tara Singh's statement that he wanted to send as many youngmen of his community into the Army as possible. When Masterji wrote to Gandhiji in this context, Gandhiji objected to the Sikhs keeping a sword saying it was the symbol of violence.

"You people have faith in the sword whereas the Congress doesn't". (Tribune, 14 Sept, 1940)

As soon as this exchange of letters was published, Master Tara Singh resigned from the national and the provincial Congress. When Tara Singh's colleagues pointed to the serious consequences of his action, he realised his mistake and on the sixth day itself announced that his resignation from the Congress was personal and the Akali Dal would continue to remain with the Congress. (Tribune, 20 September, 1940)

In October 1940 Nehru asked the Akalis to choose between cooperating with the British or working with the Congress. But the Akalis were in no state to give a clear answer to this. Meanwhile, Urdu was made the medium of primary education in Punjab. Objecting to this the Akalis demanded that Punjabi be made the medium of instruction. In July 1941 the Viceroy increased the members in his Council but none of them was a Sikh. Akalis objected to this also but to no avail.

### **Cripps Mission**

When in the 1940 Lahore Conference of the Muslim League the demand for Pakistan was raised, it found its echo in the surrounding

Muslim areas. To counter this propaganda an 'Undivided India Conference' was held in Ludhiana in November 1941. A similar conference was held in Lahore in November and in Amritsar in December. The aim of these conferences was to oppose the demand for Pakistan, check the demand for Khalistan and to strengthen national unity. During this time Japan attacked the Pearl Harbour and alongwith it Britain lost control over Singapore and Rangoon also. These defeats upset British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and to prevent the Indian leaders from exploiting the British position, in 1942 he sent the Cripps Mission to India with an offer of Dominion Status. The memorandum that the Akalis presented to the Cripps Mission shows that they were taking part in the freedom movement but at the same time did not want to lose their communal demands. They were co-operating with the Congress but had no faith in its policies. The main points in the memorandum were:

1. We do not accept the dominion status offer because it would provide a basis for separating the provinces and creating Pakistan which would deeply hurt national unity.
2. The Sikh community, right from the beginning of the British Raj and on every occasion since, loyally fought for the British, making the maximum contribution, but the British government has completely ignored their demands.
3. Instead of giving full rights to a majority community, the minorities should be allowed to live freely and to facilitate this, the boundaries should be redrawn. Jhelum should be taken as the border of Punjab and Jhang and Multan should be excluded from it as was the situation before Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Then from Delhi to Ravi and from Delhi to Jhelum the Muslims would be in a minority. Of the 26 lakh population of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Kapurthala the Muslim population is only 20 percent. The Sikhs should be given a dominant role in this area.
4. In Punjab the Sikhs are only 13.5 percent but they provide 40 percent of the revenue. Apart from this the Sikhs are running four colleges and 400 schools with their own funds. Their gurdwaras are spread out on all sides. Therefore the facilities that the Muslims are getting in Punjab, should be extended to the Sikhs also going by their status of a great community.
5. The Simon Commission has admitted that by giving more than 80,000 troops, the Sikhs had provided an example of unparalleled loyalty. At that time the number of Sikhs in the Army was 1,26,500. Such contribution from such a small community was indeed miraculous, but the Communal Award of 1932 gave

nothing in return for this loyalty. The 14.8 percent Muslims of Uttar Pradesh got 30 percent seats but the 13.5 percent Sikhs of Punjab were given only 18.8 percent seats. The Sikhs representation in the Punjab Executive Council was reduced in 1926 from 33 percent to 25 percent and in 1936 to 16 percent. We feel that the Sikh representation in the Punjab Cabinet should be 33 percent and, in no circumstances less, than 25 percent.

Apart from this they repeated the demands that they had presented to Gandhiji at the time of the Second Round Table Conference.

On the other hand, dealing a fatal blow to the Cripps Mission, the All India Congress in August 1942 gave to the country the slogan of 'Quit India'. It made it clear that it did not want independence in instalments in the form of dominion status but demanded complete independence. The Akali Dal which was presenting to the Cripps Mission its plate of loyalty decorated with their demands, was caught in a dilemma. In this state of fix, while Master Tara Singh opposed this call of the Congress, his Akali colleagues like Musafir, Kairon, Pheruman and Nagoke courted arrest in support of the Congress call. In Lyallpur in 1942, Master Tara Singh lashed out at Gandhiji's non-violence and making fun of it called upon the Sikhs to remember their rights and that their current fondness for the Congress would prove harmful for the future of the Sikhs.

### **Pakistan and Khalistan**

The Muslim League took full advantage of this rift in the *Akalis* and the Congress. The Muslim leaders increased contacts with the *Akali* leaders and with a little temptation made them declare they were prepared to live with Pakistan if there was a guarantee that they could separate from Pakistan whenever they liked. But Jinnah contemptuously rejected this demand. The country was shocked by these tactics of the *Akalis*.

In June 1942 an agreement was arrived at between Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan of the Unionist Party and Baldev Singh of Akali Dal which is known in Punjab politics as the 'Sikandar-Baldev Pact'. According to it Sikandar Hayat Khan gave the Sikhs permission for *Jhatka* (Sikh way of slaughtering animals), education in gurmukhi, Sikh representation at the Centre and in Government services. This pact gave great encouragement to the Sikhs. All the Sikhs of Punjab Council joined Baldev Singh. Tara Singh called it an agreement not for Sikhs but just between two leaders. But this Pact made the Sikhs so sentimental that

on 7 June 1943 the Akali Dal passed a resolution for Azad Punjab, thus putting a stamp of approval on the Muslim League demand for Pakistan. After the death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in December, 1943 the demands for Azad Punjab, Sikh State and Khalistan continued to grow.

Thus the land of Punjab started echoing to the slogans of Pakistan and Khalistan. This strange drama of setting your own house on fire was played by two communal forces of Punjab. The British were cunning but their crooked ways succeeded because of our own weakness. On many occasions the Muslims and the Akalis shook hands with the Congress but only with selfish motives. The democratic, secular and socialist policies of the Congress were always avoided by them. When they found no benefits from the Congress they joined together to work for their narrow interests thus putting national unity in jeopardy.

In the beginning all the Akalis were not supporters of Khalistan. In February 1943, the Central Akali Dal Working Committee had, even opposed the scheme for Azad Punjab. Many more similar conferences were held in which Pakistan spokesman Jinnah and Azad Punjab votary Master Tara Singh were called agents of Capitalists and stooges of Cripps. To silence his critics, Master Tara Singh said of the 17 demands of 1931, the fourth demand related to Azad Punjab which had been unanimously approved by the congregation. In January 1944 the Delhi Akali Conference repeated the demand for Azad Punjab and in the same month the Central Akali Dal opposed Azad Punjab. During these days the election for the Peshawar seat was held, in which there was a bitter fight between Akali candidate Balwant Singh and Saran Singh of the Congress. The main issue of the election was Azad Punjab. The Akali candidate was defeated mainly due to propaganda against Azad Punjab by Baba Khadag Singh.

This election proved that the majority of Sikhs were against Azad Punjab. Master Tara Singh was so disheartened by this defeat that he resigned from the Shiromani Akali Dal and the SGPC. In the 1944 'Hindu-Sikh Milap Conference' in Lahore, Sant Singh, MLA, said in his presidential address:

"After 1942 the Akalis had committed three mistakes: 1. Strengthening the hands of the Unionists 2. Raising the demand for Azad Punjab and 3. Joining the Muslim Cabinet of Frontier Province."

But still the Tara Singh group remained adamant on its demand.

The Akali conference of Amritsar passed five resolutions in May 1944 which were:

1. Release of political prisoners
2. Azad Punjab
3. Sikh University
4. Implementation of Sikandar-Baldev Pact and
5. Deletion of the last four chapters from Satyarth Prakash.

In July 1944 Mangal Singh, MLA, clarified that only after the coming into being of Pakistan could the demand for Azad Punjab arise. If Pakistan is not formed then there is no such demand. And then Azad Punjab will be a part of India. This is something different from Pakistan.

Sardar Sobha Singh said the British had taken Punjab from the Sikhs and hence it should be returned to them. In October 1944 Giani Sher Singh said in the Amritsar Conference of Gur Singh Sangat Sabha that in the form of Rajaji formula Gandhiji had betrayed the Sikhs and therefore now there was no alternative but to have a Sikh State. Giani Kartar Singh said that to recover the price of their sacrifices, they would have to assist the British. In the Akali conference in Lahore (Oct 1944) Master Tara Singh called the Communists, the British, Gandhi and Jinnah as threats to Sikh society. Thus we see that the Akalis had created a confusing situation by simultaneously supporting and opposing Khalistan. They used to enter into agreements with the same people whom they had declared opponents earlier. Seeing despondency and disappointments all around, it seemed the Sikh leadership lost its mental balance. It looked around on all sides for an opportunity to fulfill their selfish motives. Blinded by selfishness, they could not see their own faults.

### **Cabinet Mission**

In March 1946 arrived the Cabinet Mission whose aim was to discuss the granting of independence with political group leaders. The Akalis were happy with the presence of Major Short in the Cabinet Mission as he was a specialist on Sikh affairs. The presence of Sir Strafford Cripps however was unwelcome to them because in 1942 he had discriminated against them. In the period of three months the mission had 200 meetings and met nearly 500 prominent Indians.

On 5 April 1946 Master Tara Singh, Harnam Singh Advocate, Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh appeared before the Cabinet Mission. When they were asked which of the two communities would they go with, they were tongue tied. When they replied, it was found that all four had given different views. (Tribune, 6 April, 1946). Master Tara Singh favoured an 'Undivided India' in which there should be a

Cabinet composed of all communities and no community dominates over the other. And if India were to be divided, then the Sikhs must get a free State of their own and they should have the right to co-operate with either India or Pakistan. Harnam Singh was also opposed to division but he said if it was inevitable, then Khalistan should be formed. Giani Kartar Singh said Sikhs would be unsafe in both India and Pakistan and therefore they should get a separate State. Baldev Singh also supported Khalistan. But there were differences among them over the boundaries of Khalistan.

Actually the *Akalis* wanted Khalistan but because the Congress Sikhs opposed it, they took the cover of Pakistan. They never raised the demand for Khalistan separately but always linked it with that of Pakistan. They wanted to live in India under the condition that there should be no domination of the majorities of Hindus or Muslims. How could there be an India without Hindu majority? It was clear therefore that they did not want to live in India at all.

On 30 April Congress supporter Baldev Singh introduced a new element at the Rawalpindi Congress. He said that a 'Jatistan' should be formed comprising areas from Ravi to Meerut, Jalandhar, Ambala, Meerut and Agra Division. (Tribune 1 May, 1946). The result of such opposite views on the Cabinet Mission was that it found there was no unanimity among Sikhs even over 'Khalistan' and that there was internal conflict among them. On 16 May 1946 when the Cabinet Mission report was published, although it recognised the existence of three sides, it did not give any decision about Sikh rights. The demand for Pakistan was also rejected but a classification of India into groups 'A' and 'B' was proposed which only paved the way for Pakistan.

### **Akali Anger**

The Congress and the Muslim League expressed satisfaction at the report but the *Akalis* were angry with it. Their complaint was that the Cabinet Mission had left the Sikhs to the mercy of Muslims and even the Congress had done nothing about them. (Sardar Mangal Singh as reported in Tribune, 20 May, 1946). They felt the Sikhs had not been treated as the third community but just as Parsis, Anglo-Indians and Harijans (London Sarasfield-*'Betrayal of the Sikhs'*, pages 130-131). The Sikh reaction is expressed thus in 'Shiromani Akali Dal' by Harjinder Singh Dilgir:

"The Congress (9 and 10 June 1946, Amritsar) was presided over by General Mohan Singh Nagoke. Ishwar Singh Majhel said with tears in his eyes that the Mission had humiliated a

proud community. We shall not accept the slavery of Muslims. Babu Labh Singh said that we can protect ourselves only through bloodshed. Trembling with excitement and anger Master Tara Singh said this was not the time for groupism and opposition. In times of grief invitations are not sent. The British should understand that the roused Sikhs could harm them more than could the Muslims. Now we shall destroy the British or destroy ourselves. General Udham Singh Nagoke said if they could give two lakh soldiers to protect the British in the war, they could give for the *Morcha* as well. In 1849 Sikh Raj was snatched from us through treachery, now by 1949 we shall finish off the British Raj through sacrifices."

Seeing the worsening situation of Punjab, the Congress in June 1946 cancelled the scheme for interim government. After this the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission also decided to give up the proposal for an interim government. In the same month the Mission returned to England. The wounded hearts of the Sikhs felt relieved at this. The Cabinet Mission may not have conceded any of their demands, but the anger at this brought about such Panthic unity that forgetting their differences, even the Congress Sikhs gathered below the Nishan Sahib and started nodding their heads in favour of Khalistan. The Hindu-Sikh relationship is that of eating together and marrying among one another (*Roti-Beti ka nata*). In the same family one brother could be a Sikh and the other a normal-haired one. Their trade, industry and agriculture is common and from the point of view of history and traditions they are born of the same mother. The Sikhs never considered that after the formation of Khalistan, how would all this be protected. They did not understand that after the formation of Pakistan it was not the Sikhs alone who would face atrocities; the Hindus too would not be spared. The Muslims were a foreign race. It ruled on Hindus for centuries, so it was natural in them to have some suspicion and malice towards Hindus. But the Sikhs are only a branch of Hindus. They are tied to the soil of this country. Then what was the point in their crying out like Muslims? They had said that in the proposed Pakistan were their gurdwaras and pilgrim centres which they could not leave. But they were not prepared to understand that after the formation of Khalistan, the gurdwaras and pilgrim centres remaining behind in India would also become "orphaned" like the gurdwaras and pilgrim centres of Pakistan. They were afraid that in India or Pakistan they would lead the lives of minorities but what programme did they have for the minority Hindus who would remain in Khalistan? The Akalis have not been able to assure the Hindus that in

their religious land of Khalistan, their identity will not be threatened. On what basis then, thinking the Punjab Hindu to be with them, are they stretching their feet upto half of Haryana when going by their numbers they could hardly control two or three districts.

The *Akalis* had no answer to all these questions. They wanted to achieve their selfish ends not by some arguments or legal way but through the sword, through religious slogans. The Simon Commission, Cripps Mission or the Cabinet Mission—none of them had accepted their demand for Khalistan. But the Sikhs have always been blaming either the Congress or the Muslim League for the British rejection of their demands. This can only be called blind devotion to the British.

### **Assurance of Freedom**

In January 1947, Lord Attlee announced that before June 1948, the task of governing India will be handed over to Indians. In the same month the government lifted the ban on Muslim Guards and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and about 1500 workers of the League were released from jails. Following Attlee's announcement, Jinnah started giving more attention to Punjab. The death of Sikandar Hayat Khan came as a boon to the Muslims as the head of the new joint Unionist, Congress and *Akali* government, Khijar Hayat Khan, was a weak person. Under the influence of Muslim League politics, he resigned in March 1947. The Governor called the Muslim League to form the new government as it was the largest party in the Assembly. With this change of government the situation in Punjab changed completely. The Muslim League rent the air with Pakistan slogans in every street, every town and in every village.

On 3 March a joint meeting of Congress and *Akali* Dal was being held in the Assembly chamber in Lahore when the League mischievously collected a crowd outside, encouraging them to shout slogans like "We shall get Pakistan by any means" (*Le Ke Rahenge Pakistan*). Provoked at this Master Tara Singh came out of the chamber with his sword drawn and shouted, "We shall give our lives but not Pakistan". If the police had not intervened Masterji could not have escaped alive that day. The same evening a big public meeting was held in Lahore in which Congress and *Akali* leaders delivered powerful speeches. While the Congress leaders laid stress on peace and non-violence, the speeches of Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh made the blood of the audience boil. Masterji had roared:

"Hindus and Sikhs! Get ready to drink the peg of martyrdom.

The motherland is demanding our blood and we have to quench her thirst with this blood. I have been noticing mischief for quite sometime and that is why I have started organising Dal groups. If we can seize freedom from the British then where do the Muslims stand? Before leaving this place we must take the vow that we shall breathe freely again only after finishing the League. The Muslims seized power from Hindus, the Sikhs from Muslims and now again we shall rule. I have sounded the bugle. Destroy Muslim League . . ."

Giani Kartar Singh said that the saffron flag had been flying on the Lahore Fort and it will fly there again.

The next day, that is 4 March 1947, Hindus and Sikhs took out a massive procession in Lahore opposing the League Ministry. In the clash of police and the processionists, firing was resorted to in which 13 processionists were killed and 103 injured. It was only a foretaste of things to come.

Gauging the situation the Governor on 5 March dismissed the League government and took the administration in his own hands. This was enough provocation for the League members. The League leaders delivered inflammatory speeches thus provoking even those Muslims who used to sit and eat with Hindus and Sikhs, sang the *Heer* (a folksong) till late at night and performed the *Bhangra* (folkdance). Fires, thefts, dacoities, murders, rapes, and kidnappings increased and this state had reached its peak in areas of Multan, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Muslim-majority areas. Ludhiana, Amritsar and the Sikh States started replying to this in areas where the Muslims were in a minority. In this dangerous situation the Punjab administration looked on like a spectator. It seemed that the British were silently watching after provoking a bloodbath in order to continue indefinitely in India. Within 15 days, over 3000 people were either killed or injured in these riots. With a Muslim majority in the Punjab Police, the situation turned against the Hindus and Sikhs.

## **The Partition Proposal**

With the increase in murders and arson, on 3 April, 1947 the Sikhs passed a resolution accepting partition of Muslim majority and non-Muslim majority areas. On 8 April the Congress also passed such a resolution. On 17 April the Akali Dal gave its approval. On 18 April Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh met the Governor and requested him to get these resolutions implemented and have the riots stopped. In Delhi on 2 May the Hindu Sikh MLAs of Punjab, Central

MLAs and members of the Constituent Assembly met under the chairmanship of Chaudhari Lahri Singh and demanded partition of Punjab. As a result, Viceroy Mountbatten on 3 June 1947 announced the partition of Punjab and Bengal. On 9 June the Muslim League gave its approval to it. The Sikhs did not particularly like this partition, but they had to accept it unwillingly. The Sikhs did not want to lose the large property they had in the region going to Pakistan. Sant Singh and Mushtaque Ahmed and Giani Kartar Singh and Muslim League leaders discussed the move to have a Khalistan within Pakistan but this effort also failed because of the adamant attitude of Jinnah and some other League leaders.

According to available records, Mountbatten had decided in July itself to grant Khalistan. He had sent a notice to this effect to Jinnah and Nehru, but it seems due to the pressure of Muslim League or some other reasons the move was dropped in the last moments of August 1947. Boundary specialist Cyril Radcliffe formed a Boundary Commission of four members to prepare his boundary award. The four members were 1) Justice Teja Singh 2) Justice Din Mohammad 3) Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan and 4) Justice Mohammad Munir. The Commission started its work on 14 July 1947 and presented the award on 16 August 1947. If this award had been announced a few days earlier, that is so much before 15 August 1947 that the Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan could easily have come to India, then they would not have become victims of bestiality and lost their property and become refugees.

It is clear from the above that the thought of Khalistan had the Sikhs vacillating till the end with the result that they lost the confidence of both Hindus and Muslims. To give shape to their schemes of Khalistan they provoked agitations in Punjab and till the end they were secretly trying to strike deals with the Muslims and the British. In the end however they did not get it. But why blame the Hindus for it? This transfer of power was done by the British, and not by the Congress, and therefore it cannot be accused of betrayal. It would have been betrayal if the Congress had ever supported their demand for Khalistan. If instead of playing their own little selfish game the Akalis had joined the mainstream, and not poured oil over the fires started by the League, then the Congress could have been so strengthened as to have rejected the partition. It was only in the absence of cooperation between the Congress and the Akalis that the Muslim League could establish dominance in Punjab.

The flame of freedom was lit auspiciously but the Akalis made every possible attempt to extinguish it with their communal mentality.

Deliberately, they set forth such demands which could not be fulfilled. Under the cover of these demands they wanted to get through their evil plans for Khalisthan. With these demands they not only tried to blackmail the Congress but also laid claim of being the real rulers of Punjab. With these demands the Akalis strengthened their hold on Sikh society and created a tendency of treating the majority with disdain. This was the real betrayal of the flame of freedom.



AFTER Independence, the framers of the Indian Constitution took special care to see that the gains of freedom were not confined to some persons, sections, community, race or area. The Constitution was prepared on the strong foundation of democracy, socialism and secularism. Great honesty and impartiality was observed but still some communal elements did not like this Constitution. Some accepted it half-heartedly and some did not accept it at all. By refusing to sign the original document of the Constitution, the Akalis gave notice to the country that their parroting of Khalistan continues. But any remaining basis for Khalistan also vanished when Sardar Patel started his campaign for the merger of about 600 Indian States into the Indian Union. The Akali leadership however kept alive Khalistan for their own survival in Sikh society.

Not merely the Akalis but even Sikh intellectuals continued this illusion in society that the only way for the prosperity of their religion, culture, customs, agriculture and business was 'Khalistan'. They kept spreading the fear of their community vanishing for ever into independent India. This fear did not worry them in 1849 at the time of the fall of the Sikh empire or when they handed over the keys of the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras to the British. Why is that fear troubling them in independent India amidst their own brothers? This fear did not grip other minorities like Muslims, Christians and Parsis then why did it overwhelm the Akalis? In fact there was no cause for fear as all such possibilities had been taken care of in the Indian Constitution. This illusion of fear was deliberately kept alive so that on its basis, Akali politics could operate, the Sikhs could be provoked towards obtaining more facilities and through such agitation the government could be blackmailed and power could be seized.

## The Patel-Nehru Era

The Akali anger and resentment could not work before Sardar Patel but as soon as he breathed his last, the Akali faces lit up and they were found celebrating by lighting ghee lamps and distributing sweets.

After Patel's death a deputation of Akalis went to Lahore in April 1955. They received a warm welcome there. In the welcome function the Indian flag fluttered alongwith that of Pakistan. The Akalis objected to the Indian flag and had it replaced by the Akali flag. The Punjab Governor strongly criticized the Pakistani Government and the Akali leaders for this attitude.

There was maximum infiltration into the Congress in the Nehru era. The big guns of Akali politics started joining the Congress. Nehru considered this a result of his charismatic personality or a product of the secular Constitution of India. Nehru in his simplicity could not fathom the conspiracy or the aim for which the Akali stalwarts had changed their tactics. Veterans like Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh, Pratap Singh Kairon and Giani Zail Singh had learnt their politics in Akali schools. They were welcomed with open arms and given so much trust that in the police, trade and industry the rights of Hindus were overlooked and the Sikhs favoured with facilities much larger than their proportion. If the Congress had not followed this policy of appeasement, Punjab would not have been scorched at the hands of terrorists, the administration would not have displayed such impotence, nor would the daily agitations of Akalis have succeeded.

This political mistake encouraged the Akalis to continue making demands so as to revive the corpse of Khalistan. The Akalis launched agitations over these demands and even seized power from the Congress. They joined it to form a government when the Congress was in a majority. The Akalis joined the Jan Sangh, the Socialists, the Janata Party and the Lok Dal also at one time or the other to share power. But they never gave up their narrow outlook, fanaticism and their intransigence. The practice of mixing religion with politics had poisoned the Sikh psyche.

## After Independence

Alongwith the five rivers of Punjab, the sixth, had also started flowing—the river of blood. The blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs mingled in this river and on its banks were being sung the songs of hatred. After this destruction and the deluge of blood, it was necessary to completely root out the mentality of communalism. But instead, the

communal elements of Punjab made it into a political weapon. Without showing any regret for its activities before partition, the Akali Dal started blaming the Congress or the Hindu leaders of Punjab for the division of the country. The first priority at that time was to treat the wounded, to give solace to the heart-broken, and rehabilitate shattered humanity. But ignoring this the Akalis kept busy in gilding their own nest.

They raised the slogan that the Muslims got Pakistan, the Hindus got Hindustan, but what did the Sikhs get? The fact was that even the Sikh States, falling into the map of Khalistan, were not prepared to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of a Sikh State. Even the ordinary Sikhs and the Sikhs of the Congress were not completely with them in their demand.

### **Golden Opportunity for Masterji**

Independence meant gains for some and grief for some others but for Master Tara Singh it was a golden opportunity to spread his communal politics. Throwing salt on wounded hearts, he started rousing the feelings of battered and deprived Sikhs. To enlist the sympathy of the British he visited England. There he met the son of Wordwood. General Wordwood was for a long time in the Rawalpindi Command and later became the Commander-in-Chief. The purpose of the meeting was to secure help for the Sikh State. But Wordwood's son, in an article written for the Hindustan Times, exposed this abominable deed of Master Tara Singh.

To win the sympathy of the British, the Akali Dal even passed a resolution in favour of the missionaries propagating Christianity in India. But the elements at whose instance this resolution was passed, did not help the Akalis very much in their mission. Disappointed with Britain, Master Tara Singh went to Pakistan with some of his followers in order to secure some help from them. But the Pakistani rulers at that time saw great danger in proceeding against India as they had already burnt their fingers in Kashmir.

Dejected, the Akalis now started attacking the basic principle of secularism saying this principle would finish off Sikhism. They said secularism was a calculated conspiracy to suppress the Sikhs. The Akalis formed a scheme to foil this 'conspiracy'. In view of their anti-national activities, the then Governor of Punjab Chandulal Trivedi issued a circular on 10 October 1947 saying:

"The Sikhs are a criminal community and a threat to the peace-loving Hindus of the province. The Deputy Commissioners

should take special steps against them."

At that time the Home Minister of Punjab was Sardar Swaran Singh (who later became the Foreign Minister of India). Master Tara Singh called this circular a plot to wipe out the Sikh minority.

There was a rift among the Akalis at this time. The Sikh leaders who had left the Akali Dal and joined the Congress were active against communal elements. Those who were preparing to join the Congress and did not fully agree with the Akali views were shaking the Akali foundation. Watching their political wing collapsing in this way, the Akalis thought it expedient to try and save Sikhism by joining the Congress. In March 1948, therefore, the Akali Dal Working Committee decided that the 23 MLAs of the Akali Dal and the MPs should join the Congress. Master Tara Singh was against this decision but he had to bow before the majority. After this, Akali leader Udham Singh Nagoke accused the 'Hindu' Congress government (even before Independence the Akalis termed the Congress a Hindu organisation and still keep spreading that illusion) of having 72 to 96 percent government officials as Hindus and that they were discriminating against the Sikhs. This statement was made at a time when all the Sikh legislators had filled up forms for joining the Congress.

### **Beginning of Demands**

On 24 April, 1948, in his presidential address to the Sikh students Federation, Master Tara Singh called the Sikhs the protectors of Hindu *dharma*. This view was expressed at a time when the committee on minority rights, comprising Nehru, Patel, Ambedkar, Rajendra Prasad and K.M. Munshi, had expressed itself against any special rights to the Sikhs. In this situation Master Tara Singh should have been fuming but instead he was polite and gentle. The mystery cleared when in June 1948 the Bhargava government of Punjab made Punjabi and Hindi the mediums of instruction.

Punjabi at that time was merely a religious language and because of the efforts of Arya Samaj, the wind was blowing in favour of Hindi. Due to the work done by D.A.V. Institutions in the field of education, Hindi was given importance which was next only to that of English. The Punjabi language, which did not get a pride of place in administration or education even in the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had suddenly come to the fore mainly because the Akalis had been active in its cause for a long time. The 'Mahashaya Press' of Punjab described the policy of appeasement as bowing to communal pressure and warned of serious consequences.

The Akali Dal was so pleased with this decision that despite being a votary of separatism and contrary to its previous conduct, it spoke against separate electorates in the October 1948 debate on the draft Constitution. The very next month, that is, in November 1948, demanding a price for their generosity, the Sikh MLAs (except Pratap Singh Kairon) presented a charter of 13 demands, of which the following were the main ones:

1. The Sikhs must get 50 percent share in the Provincial Ministry.
2. This share should be 5 percent at the Centre.
3. One Minister of Cabinet rank and one Minister of State rank should be a Sikh.
4. Representation should be made on the basis of the 1941 census.
5. Either the Governor or the Chief Minister of Punjab should be a Sikh.
6. Gurgaon and Loharu must be taken out of Punjab.
7. The Sikhs must get 40 percent of the jobs in the province.
8. If these demands are not accepted, then the Sikhs should be given a new province comprising Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Gurdaspur and Ambala districts. The Sikhs would get PEPSU also which already had 53 percent Sikhs.

In 1947 the total population of Punjab was 1,58,66, 888. Out of this the Sikhs were 55,54, 518 (35 percent) the Hindus 98,80, 779 (62.3 percent). Of the 87 members of Punjab Assembly 22 were Akalis (25 percent) 50 Congressmen (56%) and 14 independents (16%). The Akalis were demanding facilities in excess of their numbers and had placed the condition of a Sikh majority State if these demands were not met. Deliberately such demands were presented which had no basis and if these were rejected the Government could be pressurised to concede a Sikh State or a Punjabi Suba (the foetus of Khalistan). A committee was formed to discuss these demands. It comprised Bhimsen Sachchar, Chaudhari Lahari Singh, B.L. Channan, Suraj Mal, Shanno Devi, Sardar Swaran Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Ujjwal Singh, Ishwar Singh Majhel and Babu Vachan Singh. Lot of opposition against these demands came from the Mahashaya Press and the Tribune. The Sikh-majority State that the Akalis were demanding was on the border with Pakistan and keeping in view the activities and conduct of the Akalis at that time, they could not be trusted with a separate State. These demands were such which could, if conceded, set off a chain reaction of communal demands in

the rest of the country. Master Tara Singh again changed his stance and declared at a Press conference in November 1948 that the Hindu *dharma* was threatening to swallow the Sikh community. He said the attacks of the Hindu Press had assumed dangerous dimensions. Thus the illusion that Macauliffe had sown into Sikh minds was now being given free play.

To express his views more forcefully, Master Tara Singh decided to call a conference in Delhi in February 1948. The Central Government sent Defence Minister Baldev Singh to have this conference cancelled. The Akali Dal Working Committee discussed the issue and decided that the conference must be held. The Constitution was being drafted at that time; therefore a demonstration in support of their demands was considered necessary. The conference was to be held at Ramlila Grounds but later the venue was changed to Gurdwara Rakabganj in the form of Shahidi Dewan. On his way to Delhi, Master Tara Singh was arrested at Narela and sent to jail. The speakers scheduled to address the Dewan were also arrested. Sardar Baldev Singh accused Master Tara Singh of trying to incite communalism. The Akalis observed protest day on 2 March 1949 and on 4 April 1949 a conference of Sikh intellectuals was called in Amritsar where for the first time the resolution for Punjabi Suba was passed.

## **The Suba Demand**

Some events at this time gave a handle to the Akalis to spread this game further. In February 1949, the Jalandhar Municipal Committee unanimously decided that it would have Hindi as medium of education in its schools instead of Punjabi. On 9 June 1949, the Solan Senate of Punjab University rejected the proposal for Punjabi medium of education. The Committee studying the charter of demands presented its report in which the special facilities for Sikhs were refused.

In October 1949, the Government applied the Sachchar formula and the study of Punjabi was made compulsory in the Punjabi zone. The Punjabi zone comprised Amritsar, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, some parts of Hissar and Ropar and Kharar (Ambala District). This formula later created lot of tension in Punjab. There was a flexibility in this formula that if the parents desired they could adopt any other language as medium of education. In the 1949 matric examination, 12028 Hindus and 3940 Sikh students appeared for the exam in which the Hindus adopted the Hindi medium and the Sikhs the Punjabi medium. Because of this situation the Akalis did not find much advantage in the Sachchar

formula. They wanted that only Punjabi should be adopted in the Punjabi region. But the Arya Samaj was not prepared to give protection to such a policy. It favoured the-growth of Punjabi, but not at the cost of Hindi.

Unhappy with the progress of Hindi and the award of the committee on minorities, Master Tara Singh made the following declaration after coming out of jail on 10 October 1949:

"The Sikh culture is different from the culture of the Hindus. Just as the Hindus consider Gurmukhi as the language of the Sikhs, in the same way the Sikh traditions, heroes, history and social structure is different. The Sikh culture is Gurmukhi culture."

The new Constitution of India was passed on 26 Nov. 1949. The Sikhs refused to sign it on the ground that it did not provide the Sikhs separate representation, gains or protection. But it was now too late. Any objection would have been valid before the time of passing the Constitution. The refusal to sign was meaningless as the Akali Dal itself had fought elections on this basis afterwards.

In January and February 1950, the Akali Dal President said in Bombay and Ludhiana that on the basis of Punjab's language and culture, the division of Punjab into Punjabi Suba was necessary and this was a democratic demand.

"Those calling it a communal demand are communal themselves. This is the same demand which Gandhiji and other Congress leaders have been supporting."

In July 1950, speaking at a Harijan conference Punjab's Minister Giani Kartar Singh said that the Akali Dal demand was for a Sikh State and not for Punjabi Suba. Punjab's Development Minister Ishwar Singh Majhel also gave a similar statement. In July 1950 the Akalis took the surprising step of asking the Akali legislators to quit the Congress. A meeting was called to discuss this unilateral decision of the Akali working committee. Among those who took part were Baldev Singh, Ishwar Singh Majhel, Giani Kartar Singh, Ujjwal Singh, Swaran Singh, Gurbachan Singh Bajwa, Shiv Singh, Man Singh, Sardul Singh, Tara Singh and Sarmukh Singh. After long consultations the MLAs decided to continue in the Congress. On 15 December 1950, Pratap Singh Kairon called an 'All-India Congress Sikhs convention' in which all the leading Congress Sikhs made strong attacks on Akali Dal and the Punjabi Suba demand.

At the time of the 1951 census, the Hindu Press launched a big propaganda to see that the Punjabi Hindus and Harijans mentioned their mother tongue as Hindi. This shattered the Sikh dream of Punjabi dominance. After this census defeat the Akalis called a big

conference in Patiala in September 1951 in which about 4 to 5 lakh Sikhs took part. Great prominence was given to the Punjabi Suba demand in this conference. Meanwhile a debate on 'Hindu Code Bill' was going on in Parliament. In Section two of this Bill, like the Buddhists and Jains, the Sikhs are also taken as Hindus. The Akali legislators protested against this but their opposition did not carry much weight. The extremist Akalis, who dislike being called Hindus, took advantage of this arrangement to rouse communal feelings. In the General Elections of 1952, the Akalis made Punjabi Suba a big issue but were badly defeated. But in the SGPC elections the Akalis were able to demonstrate their superiority and won a big victory. Now they wanted to bring up the Punjabi Suba demand even more forcefully. By 1955 the Akalis were able to gather adequate support for Punjabi Suba. In July 1955, the police had to enter Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar and to use teargas, lathi-charge and even firing to control the agitators. Anger against this action remained in the atmosphere for a long time.

## **Maha Punjab**

The boundary Commission, appointed in 1953, gave its report in October 1955. It totally rejected the demand for Punjabi Suba and instead proposed formation of Maha Punjab. The Akalis sensed a plot in this recommendation of Maha Punjab comprising Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh because it would reduce them further to a minority. The Akalis called it an atomic explosion on the Sikhs. When the issue of dividing Bombay State into Maharashtra and Gujarat came up, the Punjabi Suba supporters found new justification for it. In January 1956, Bhimsen Sachchar resigned and Pratap Singh Kairon became the Chief Minister. The very next day Jan Sangh workers demonstrated against Punjabi Suba and in support of Maha Punjab in front of Kalgidhar gurudwara in Ludhiana. In February 1956 the Congress, the Akali Dal and the Maha Punjab supporters held separate conferences in Amritsar. On this occasion the Sikhs took out a six-mile long procession in support of Punjabi Suba.

## **Regional Formula**

In March 1956, the government presented the regional formula according to which Punjab and Pepsu together would form two zones. Himachal would be separate. There was a proposal to make a Punjabi and a Hindi zone in Punjab which would have different regional councils. These councils would have powers excluding those of law

and administration, tax and finances and the decisions of these councils would be binding on the Cabinet. Any disputes would be settled by the Governor. The language of Punjabi region would be Punjabi and the script would be *Gurmukhi*. In Pepsu, the Punjabi formula would be applicable to the Punjabi zone and the Sachchar formula in the Hindi zone. There would be no difference in Hindu-Sikh scheduled castes.

Sardar Hukam Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Gian Singh Rarewala were the first to support the regional formula. The Akalis at first opposed the formula but on studying it closely they found some gains in it. Then they gave it their support. Ajit Singh Sarhadi discloses in his book 'Punjabi Suba' (page 265) that this formula was the brain wave of Hukam Singh. An article under an artificial name had already been published in 'Free Thinker' and it was credited to Hukam Singh. A copy of this article was given by him to Pandit Pant. It was after this formula that he was made Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha although he did not belong to the ruling Congress, but to the Opposition. The Punjabi Suba demand faded away for sometime after this regional formula. In March-April 1956 Punjab Jan Sangh leader Balramji Das Tandon observed fast against the regional formula. Pratap Singh Kairon was also against the regional formula and was in favour of Maha Punjab.

The regional formula gave a great boost to Sikh Congressmen and they were able to pull many Akali leaders into the Congress fold. As a result it became possible to contain the activities of Akali Dal in protecting Sikh *dharma*, language and culture. In spite of the opposition of Master Tara Singh the general conference of Akali Dal (November 1956) decided by 350-322 votes to merge into the Congress.

### **Save-Hindi Campaign**

In the 1957 elections the Akalis and the Congress had differences over seats. The Akalis expected at least 40 seats but they were given just 17-18 and later 22 seats. In resentment Master Tara Singh put up his own 23 candidates as independents. But all his candidates were defeated. In April 1957 the new Ministry took oath and in the same month the Hindi Raksha Samiti started demonstrations against the regional formula. The Committee was led by Arya Samaj leader Swami Atmanand Saraswati.

The Hindi Press played a big role in fanning this agitation. Concerned at the ferocity of this agitation, Giani Kartar Singh warned

that if the regional formula failed, the Punjabi Suba *morcha* will be revived. Lal Chand Sabharwal threatened that if Punjabi was imposed, the *morcha* would reach the towns and the streets. The Arya Samaj had completely thrown itself into the agitation and agitator groups were reaching Chandigarh from even outside Punjab. Hukam Singh said this agitation was a conspiracy aimed at finishing off Punjabi. Swami Atmanand said:

"The regional formula means making Sikhistan of Punjab and Sikhistan means Khalistan. It being a border State, this conspiracy will not be allowed to succeed in Punjab."

The agitation was at its peak when a few unpleasant incidents took place which were publicised as the mischief of Akalis on the one hand and that of the Arya Samajis on the other. On 17 July 1957 a cigarette was found floating in the sacred tank of Golden Temple in Amritsar. There were incidents of cutting of the hair of a Sikh, throwing of torn sheets of Sikh sacred books in gurdwaras and public places, mailing of cigarette packets to Sikhs and erasing of Punjabi name plates. It was also publicised that the foundation of Harmandir tank was laid by a meat-eating Muslim and therefore it was not holy. These stories, whether true or false, enraged the Sikhs and in protest they took out a five-mile long procession in Delhi in February 1958.

### **Support for Punjabi Suba**

Alleging discrimination toward the Haryana province by the Punjab Government, Arya Samaj leader Sher Singh also came out in support of Punjabi Suba so that Haryana could emerge on the map of India as a separate province. In May 1960, a Punjabi Suba convention was held in Amritsar under the chairmanship of Pandit Sunderlal. Leaders of Hindus, Muslims, Praja Socialists, Samyakta Socialists and Swatantra Party took part in the convention and called for early setting up of Punjabi Suba. The convention also demanded the establishment of Vishal Himachal and Haryana State. In this way two fronts were opened to campaign for Punjabi Suba. Jan Sangh leader Balraj Madhok, Arya Samaj leader Prof Ram Singh and Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon were against granting of Punjabi Suba on the border.

On 17 November 1960, Akali Dal gave permission to Sant Fateh Singh to begin his fast in December. But later, due to a trick played by Master Tara Singh, the Sant gave up his fast midway. When the people came to know of the truth, Master Tara Singh had to face *murdabad* slogans at the Manji Saheb dewan. He had to escape with the help of *granthis* leaving his speech unfinished.

In May 1961, disappointed with his meeting with Nehru, Master Tara Singh began a fast-unto-death and to oppose this, Swami Rameshwaranand also started a fast unto death. On Nehru's statement in Parliament that Punjabi Suba will not be formed, Swamiji broke his fast. In October the Central Government announced the setting up of a commission to study the alleged discrimination against Sikhs at which Master Tara Singh also broke his fast.

In December 1961 the commission started the proceedings and presented its report in February 1962, which said the allegation of discrimination was baseless. This way the demand for Punjabi Suba cooled for sometime. The differences between the two *Sants* increased and the Akali Dal broke up into two which was disheartening to the Sikhs. Due to the Chinese aggression in 1962, the Punjabi Suba demand went into the background. In March 1963 the Punjabi-Himachal Jan Sangh working committee demanded that the provincial Assembly be dissolved and Punjab be made a Centrally-administered State. \*

Jawaharlal Nehru died in May 1964. In June 1964, Pratap Singh Kairon had to quit following strictures passed against him by the Das Commission. Both these leaders were against Punjabi Suba. To end the rift between Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh, Darshan Singh Pheruman threatened a fast-unto-death. The result was that after 37 months Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh met each other. The Central Government also decided to study all the aspects of the Punjabi Suba demand. The Akalis spread the story that Punjabi Suba was not being granted because the "Hindu Government" of Delhi suspected their patriotism. The Communist Party also chipped in with support for the Punjabi Suba demand. Haryana on its own was eager to get rid of the discrimination by the Sikhs.

In September 1965 the Government decided to set up a commission on Punjabi Suba. Sant Fateh Singh issued a statement saying:

"We are not interested in a commission but in Punjabi Suba which I prefer even to the country." (Tribune. 4-9-1965)

On 10 September he started another fast-unto-death. He said:

"I have nothing to do with the boundaries of the Punjabi Suba; all I want is Punjabi Suba."

Master Tara Singh had a different concept of Punjabi Suba in his mind.

In January 1966, Mrs Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister of the country. On one side were the Akalis, Communists, Harayanvis and Haryana Arya Samaj leaders supporting the Punjabi Suba and on the other were Jan Sangh, Arya Samajists of Punjab and Haryana's

Prof Ram Singh, Swami Rameshwaranand and Hindu Congressmen were opposing it. Punjab Chief Minister Comrade Ram Kishan also opposed Punjabi Suba. Yogi Suryadev announced he would go on fast-unto-death against the Punjabi Suba demand. In March 1966 Jan Sangh leader Yagya Dutt Sharma started a fast-unto-death against the Punjabi Suba demand. The Hindu traders of Punjab began a series of *hartals*. The students of D.A.V. institutions organised demonstrations. The clashes with police continued. The Amritsar Congress office was burnt down. Forced by circumstances, the Government decided to form Punjabi Suba on the basis of the 1961 census. Gulzari Lal Nanda took special care of Haryana interests. In April 1966 a three-member boundary commission was set up for this purpose and it gave its report on 5 June 1966. The members of this commission were Justice Shah, M.M. Philip and S. Dutt.

### Seeds of Discord

Two of the three members of the Commission recommended Chandigarh for Haryana. Una, Anandpur and Bhakra were given to Himachal. Kharar Tehsil was recommended for Haryana. The Akali reaction to the report was sharp. Gurdial Singh Dhillon threatened to resign from his position. Kamaraj, Darbara Singh and some other central Ministers were in favour of giving Chandigarh to Punjab. Thus in June 1966 Chandigarh was declared a Union Territory. Master Tara Singh and most Ministers of Punjab threatened to resign over this issue. All the MLAs of Haryana also issued similar threats. Sant Fateh Singh also demanded Chandigarh for Punjab. In August 1966 Lok Sabha passed the Punjab Reorganisation Act. Speaking on the Bill, Bhupesh Gupta and Hiren Mukherjee (CPI) wanted Chandigarh to be given to Punjab and Peter Alvares (PSP) said it should be in Haryana. Opposing the Bill Sardar Kapur Singh Said:

"The Sikhs cannot accept it because (1) it is born of sin (2) an untrained midwife has helped in its birth and (3) it is against national interests and attacks national unity. This is the betrayal of the Sikhs who have protected the Hindu race."

On 1 November 1966 Punjab was divided once again. It had contracted even more than before. This broken up and disfigured Punjab was a sight that wounded the hearts of both Sikhs and Hindus. The Punjabi Hindu had desired a Maha Punjab, an unbroken Punjab. The Sikhs despite being 56% in the new Punjab, were unhappy because the areas that the Akalis had been eyeing in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu Kashmir were denied to them. The

Akalis wanted that except for Defence, Finance, Post and Telegraph, the rest of the rights should vest in them. But this too was denied to them. Haryana and Himachal were happy with this division because in the last 20 years their rights had been mercilessly crushed. Now they could build their own future.

## **Sikh Homeland**

To shape the reorganised Punjab according to their wishes, the Akalis decided to open a new *marcha*. Sant Fateh Singh demanded that Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas be given to Punjab and the common projects returned to Punjab otherwise he would begin fast unto death on 17 December 1966 and commit self-immolation on 27 December. Master Tara Singh supported these demands and at the annual conference in Ludhiana passed a resolution in favour of Sikh homeland. To counter this, Yogi Surya Dev threatened to go on fast and demanded that the Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab be given to Haryana.

At the appointed hour, Sant Fateh Singh started his fast-unto-death. He broke it soon at the intervention of Hukam Singh. Hukam Singh made an announcement at the Akal Takht that Indira Gandhi be made the arbiter and a commission be set up on the Punjabi speaking areas,

"Then we can expect Chandigarh to be given to Punjab."

Echoes of "No, no" resounded on all sides but to save the precious life of Santji, Indira Gandhi was accepted as the arbiter despite all opposition. Master Tara Singh said in his statement:

"By breaking his fast without a written assurance Sant Fateh Singh has insulted Sikhism."

Possibly this was a political conspiracy due to which Fateh Singh rapidly lost respect. In January 1967 the Tara Singh group of Akalis reiterated its demand for Sikh homeland. Hargurand Singh said even foreign help could be taken for Sikh homeland.

In this period political events took place very rapidly indicating the unsettled conditions at that time. There was a quick succession of Chief Ministers. Gurumukh Singh Musafir was Chief Minister from 1 November 1966 to February 1967 elections, Gurnam Singh from 8 March 1967 to 22 November 1967 and Lacchman Singh Gill from 25 Nov 1967 to 21 August 1968. In August 1968, President's Rule was imposed on Punjab. Master Tara Singh had died on 22 November 1967. In these ups and downs, the Akalis tried to make adjustments with all parties. A significant decision taken during the

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Lacchman Singh Gill rule was introduction of Punjabi at the district level on 14 January 1968 and at the secretariat level on 13 April 1968. The Jan Sangh was the main partner in the Gill Ministry. This decision created a wave of anger in the Hindi areas. This anger increased when Gurnam Singh attached the 46 colleges of Jalandhar, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Kapurthala to the Guru Nank University. The Arya Samaj had been contemplating a Dayanand University in Jalandhar. This decision wrecked their plans. The Arya Samaj blamed the Jan Sangh for it and started criticizing it. As a result the Jan Sangh also made a show of criticizing the Akalis. The Arya Samaj took the matter to court and emerged successful. Meanwhile, Darshan Singh Pheruman died on the 74th day of his fast for Sikh homeland. Sant Fateh Singh and Jeevan Singh Umranangal termed it a fraud but the Tara Singh group Akalis called him the first martyr for Sikh homeland and tried to rouse the Sikhs over it.

### **Chandigarh to Punjab**

It was testing time for Sant Fateh Singh as earlier in 1960, 1965 and 1966 he went on fasts unto death but could not become a Pheruman. So this time he went on fast for Chandigarh on 27 January 1970 and announced 1 February 1970 as his date for self-immolation. An angry Jeevan Singh Umranangal declared that Punjab would be set afire if anything untoward happened to the Sant. The Akalis announced resignations as Ministers and MLAs. An atmosphere of hatred was spreading. The Akalis removed the national flag from atop the Central excise building and burnt it over the statue of Mahatama Gandhi. Similar incidents took place at other places as well. The situation deteriorated so much that on 29 January, Indira Gandhi announced the granting of Chandigarh to Punjab.

According to the announcement, in exchange for Chandigarh a part of Fazilka and Abohar districts were to be given to Haryana. Apart from this, Haryana was to get a passage of one furlong and Rs 10 crore help and a similar amount as loan to build a new Capital. It was recommended that controversial issues be referred to a commission. Punjab was to get Chandigarh after five years, that is, in 1975. Welcoming this announcement, Sant Fateh Singh broke his fast. The Akalis were greatly relieved. But the Master Tara Singh group expressed resentment over it. The Jan Sangh parliamentary board in February also opposed it. The settlement of giving away 550 sq mile fertile land of 114 villages for 34 sq mile of Chandigarh was called a white elephant bought for face saving. In the Assembly Gurnam Singh

was accused of contriving this settlement to save the life of Fateh Singh. The Jan Sangh, under the pressure of Arya Samajis, started criticising the Akalis. The result was that Gurnam Singh had to resign and in March 1970 Prakash Singh Badal became the Chief Minister with the help of the Jan Sangh. The Akali Dal later expelled Gurnam Singh from the party.

Badal lasted till June 1971. CPI's Satpal Dang listed 33 charges of corruption against him and the D.D. Dave probe Commission found him guilty of 11 of these 33 charges. In December 1971, after the declaration of Indo-Pak war, the Akalis postponed their 'Sikh Homeland' *morcha*.

'Sikh Homeland' was in fact a trick to fool India. Under its cover the Sikhs had all the time been hatching a conspiracy for an independent Sikh nation. This conspiracy had been going on even before independence. Despite the weakening of Hindu-Sikh relations their social and family ties remained strong and until 1971 this conspiracy could not succeed. But the Akalis did succeed in creating a rift between Hindus and Sikhs, in spreading hatred and distrust. This was perhaps the first requirement of realising their dream of Khalistan.

When the Akali leaders started looking abroad for assistance in creating Khalistan, then the so-called nationalist Sikhs should have condemned it, but they did not. On the political plane, Sikh congressmen did criticise it, but this criticism never became the criticism of Sikh society.

## Foreign Help

The Khalistan conspiracy abroad was exposed in September 1971 when the newspapers reported an interview that Akali Dal General Secretary Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan gave to the Punjabi weekly *Desh Pradesh* of London. Chauhan, who was Finance Minister in the Lacchman Singh Gill Ministry and was foremost in motivating Darshan Singh Pheruman to go on a fast-unto-death, said in the interview that the HQ of independent Khalistan government would be *Nankana Sahib* (Pakistan). At that time Pakistan was thinking of granting Vatican status to *Nankana Sahib*, whose area was 10 sq miles. This scheme was a part of the plan to provide facilities and base of operation to the rebel Sikhs. Dr Chauhan had left India even before the Sant group's Delhi *morcha* campaign.

Dr Chauhan revealed that Pakistan, and some countries of West Asia would recognise his rebel government. By that time Chauhan had visited Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iran and Britain and was preparing to

visit Canada and America. For three years the Lahore centre of Radio Pakistan continued a daily programme designed to mislead and excite the Sikhs. With his poisonous speeches in this anti-India programme, Dr Chauhan tried to change the mentality of the Sikhs. He would often ask that the Government of India had helped create Bangladesh going by the self-determination demand of the Bengalis, but why does it not concede Khalistan to satisfy the self-determination demand of the Sikhs?

In early 1970, two disgruntled Akali leaders alleged that some top Akali leaders had ties with Pakistan. Sant Fateh Singh was in fact born a Muslim. In October 1971 an MP, Prabodh Chandra said Dr Chauhan had received a huge sum from Pakistan for anti-India propaganda. He also said that among the five persons who raised slogans for Khalistan outside the United Nations, were members of the Pakistani mission in America. Referring to Dr Chauhan's anti-India activities during the 1971 war, Chief Minister Zail Singh regretted in the Punjab Assembly on 7 April 1972 that even after knowing this the Akali Dal had taken no action against him. Only after India won the war against Pakistan that the Akali Dal went through the drama of expelling Dr Chauhan from the Dal.

Communist leader Satyapal Dang revealed in the Assembly that one Akali leader got so excited after listening to a broadcast on Radio Pakistan by Dr Chauhan that he started shouting slogans in his praise in the Bhatinda court compound. Prakash Singh Badal also said in those days that the Indian Government had shown great sympathy for the aspirations and religious feelings of the people of Bangladesh and Arab countries but had not appreciated the feelings of the Sikhs who could not visit their holy places in Pakistan due to the continuous tension between India and Pakistan.

On this basis the Akalis started a campaign for the release of Pakistani soldiers who had surrendered in Bangladesh. Although Swatantra Party leader Piloo Mody (a great friend of Bhutto) and veteran leader Acharya Kripalani had also asked for the release of the prisoners, there was a well-thought out motive behind the Akali demand.

### **Advertisement in NYT**

On 12 October 1971, Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, in his capacity as General Secretary of the Akali Dal, gave a signed advertisement in New York Times which cost Rs 1 lakh. This advertisement was to be presented to the United Nations the next day. A copy of this advertise-

ment was published in the New Delhi journal *Panth Prakash* (November 1971, number 44-45). It alleged that the Sikhs were leading a life of slavery under Hindus and related stories of atrocities on Sikhs. If the facilities being received by the Sikhs in Punjab are compared with this advertisement, then the Sikh society can understand how, stricken by greed, one of their own brethren had become a Jaichand. The following are the main points of this advertisement:

1. The one crore 20 lakh Sikhs of India fear extinction and nearly 60 lakh are living the lives of exiles, waiting for freedom. We have sounded the last bugle against this situation.
2. From a religious and cultural point of view, the Sikhs are a different community, a separate race. Those who are aware of history cannot forget that they have met countless atrocities at the hands of majority Hindus.
3. After Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, power went into British hands. But in 1947, the partition was made between Hindus and Muslims and the Sikhs were ignored. India had assured the Sikhs that the Sikhs would be given an area where they could live freely according to their religion. But the Hindu rulers of India played a game of betrayal which has become unbearable now.
4. Gurdwara elections, which were to be held two years earlier, could not be held because of the indifference of the Indian Government and this is another example of the attempt to wipe out the Sikhs. The gurdwaras control has been handed over to an organisation which is a tool of the government. Because of this, the communal unity and religious and cultural freedom of the Sikhs has been threatened.
5. In the early 20th century the Sikhs had helped the British on the understanding that whenever India is divided the Sikhs would be considered a separate nation and given the area where they had ruled once.
6. The Sikhs were in the forefront of the freedom struggle. Among those killed in the *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre 950 were Sikhs, of the 110 revolutionaries executed by the British, 97 were Sikhs. But this sacrifice was forgotten and the issue of freedom for the Sikhs was suppressed. During the 1965 war with Pakistan, the Generals reminded the Indian Government of the assurances given by Gandhi and Nehru, but by creating Haryana and Himachal on the basis of language, a truncated Punjab was given to the Sikhs.
7. The only guarantee of peace in the sub-continent is a free Sikhistan. Which only means recognising Sikh history and

honouring it. No power in the world can suppress the Sikhs. Let the Hindu government of Delhi be warned that if it continues this policy of betrayal there would be a war in the sub-continent which would be unparalleled in the history of the world. If the United Nations wants to maintain peace in Asia, it will have to accept this claim of the Sikhs.

During these days pamphlets and newspapers were sent from Canada to religious, social, educational and trade organisations of the Sikhs. The main argument in the material was that just as Bengalis have got their Bangladesh, in the same way the Sikhs also want Khalistan. Indira Gandhi, who has faith in self-determination, broke this faith in the case of the Sikhs. If the Congress does not form an interim government of Khalistan then bloodshed is assured.

This poisonous literature also contained a map of Khalistan which showed the entire Punjab, and some parts of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It was suggested that India's capital should be shifted from Delhi to Allahabad because by history and tradition, New Delhi forms a part of Khalistan. One pamphlet claimed that formed between India and Pakistan, Khalistan will remain a guarantee of peace for centuries.

It is true that Akali Dal had expelled Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan but the mentality created by him was preserved by them. The arguments that Chauhan had used, the rape of history and traditions as presented by him and the map of Khalistan that was in his mind emerged after two-three years in the Anandpur Sahib resolution. Obviously, the expulsion of Chauhan from the Akali Dal was a ruse to the nation.

# 12 From Anandpur to Bestiality

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**I**N the last few years the self-esteem of the nation has been hurt by Akali Agitations, the activities of terrorists and the schemes hatched abroad. The origin of all this was the vow taken at a meeting in Anandpur Sahib on 16–17 October in 1973. This vow is famous as the 'Anandpur Sahib Resolution'. This resolution has been drafted with great care and skill and given its present form after long deliberations. The ideas and the language of the resolution indicate that it was drafted abroad with the help of foreign diplomats. The effect left behind by the Akali agitations and terrorism in the last few years shows that planning for all this had been done even before 1973.

The first attempt of the Akalis was to put on the mask of democracy and hiding their autocratic ways they tried to win their demands through negotiations. But when their evil intentions were exposed, they removed the pretence of faith in democracy and bared their fangs. The Akalis and extremist Sikhs swear by the Anandpur resolution even today and are not prepared to give it up at any cost. Therefore the country and particularly the nationalist forces of Punjab, have to be constantly on the guard. Anandpur Sahib resolution is in fact a document of treason, a blank cheque for Khalistan. A brief glimpse of it is presented here:

"India's Sikhs are a historically recognised political nation ever since the last year of the 17th century (1699).

This status of Sikh nation has obtained international recognition and by the middle of 19th century it was accepted by Europe, and leading powers of Asia, France, England, Italy, Russia, China, Tibet, Persia, Afghanistan, Nepal and East India Company, Fort William, Calcutta and in the 20th century by the outgoing British and India's Hindu Congress party and the Muslim League.

The brute majority of India imposed such a constitutional system which denies the political existence of the Sikhs and subjugates their cultural identity. The Sikhs are being finished as a political identity, they are being denied a chance to control their own history and to drown them in the saline sea of unripe Hinduism, their spiritual and cultural downfall is being arranged.

To tie the Sikhs in chains and to enslave them, the solemn, strictly maintained public promises that the Hindus had made to the Sikhs, were immorally and wickedly rejected. The Sikh representatives had refused to go along with the misguided and burdensome system being arranged by the Constituent Assembly and had in 1950 refused to sign the official copy of the famous Indian Constitution enactment.

In the name of the Sikhs, Shiromani Akali Dal declares that it is committed to free the Sikhs by all legal means from this insulting and stultifying state so that their honourable identity is maintained and their prestige and their right, as before, to influence the mainstream of history is resurrected.

Therefore the Sikhs demand that, firstly, in the north of India an autonomous area be formed where Sikh interests are protected in a constitutional way and for deciding their political future, they are given the freedom to choose their own political system. Secondly this autonomous area should include the present Indian Punjab, Karnal in Haryana and some parts of Ambala district, Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, Paonta Sahib in Kulu valley, Chandigarh, Pinjore, Kalka, Dalhousie, Dehradun Valley, Nalagarh area, Sirsa, Guhla, Tohana and Rattiya and Ganganagar district in Rajasthan and the Terai area in Uttar Pradesh which the Sikhs have cultivated after cutting off dangerous jungles thousands of years old. This way the traditional and natural Sikh areas be in this autonomous Sikh state which should be a part of the Indian Union.

Thirdly, this autonomous Sikh area should be authorised to draft its own constitution. Only foreign relations, defence and communications should remain with the Indian Union."

In April 1981 a world Sikh conference was held in Anandpur Sahib in which the Talwandi group Akali Dal presented a different version of the Anandpur Sahib resolution. It said:

"An autonomous state should be set up immediately in north India where importance should be given to Sikh interests and constitutional recognition be given to their special interests, and

a Sikh autonomous unit should be accepted and except for foreign relations, defence and communications, it should be given the right to form its own constitution and to acquire other powers for itself.

### **Basic Postulates**

At the October 1973 Anandpur Sahib meeting, the Akali Dal also adopted certain "basic postulates of the Shiromani Akali Dal". Without any qualms it described itself as "the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh nation and as such fully entitled to its representation." It said the basic postulates of this organisation are human co-existence, human progress and ultimate unity of all human beings with the Spiritual Soul"

Among the aims it set for itself, apart from the usual propagation of Sikhism, were,

"eradication of poverty and starvation by increased production and more equitable distribution of wealth and the establishment of a just social order sans any exploitation."

Another aim was:

"Striving for the removal of diseases and ill-health, denunciation of use of intoxicants and enlargement of facilities for physical well-being to prepare and enthuse the Nation for defence."

It resolved on taking appropriate steps for the enactment of an All-India gurdwara Act with a view to introducing "improvements in the administration of gurdwaras throughout the country" and

"taking steps to bring the Sikh gurdwaras all over the world under a single system of administration with a view to running them according to the basic Sikh norms and to pool their resources for the dissemination of Sikhism on a wider and a more impressive scale."

"The Shiromani Akali Dal would also endeavour to have the Indian Constitution recast on real federal principles, with equal representation at the Centre for all the States."

"The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly denounces the foreign policy of India framed by the Congress party. It is worthless, hopeless, and highly detrimental to the interests of the nation and mankind at large. Shiromani Akali Dal shall extend its support only to that foreign policy of India which is based on the principles of peace with all neighbouring countries, especially those inhabited by the Sikhs and their sacred shrines. The Akali Dal is of the firm view that our foreign policy should in no case play second fiddle to any other country."

"The Shiromani Akali Dal is of the firm opinion that all those persons who have not been convicted of any offence by a court of law, should be at liberty to possess all types of small arms like revolvers, guns, pistols, rifles, carbines etc. without any licence: the only obligation being their registration."

### **Action Plan**

The 18th All-India Akali conference held at Ludhiana on 28-29 October 1978, under the presidentship of Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi, adopted an action plan of 12 resolutions in the light of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. It was after the passing of these resolutions that the Shiromani Akali Dal started the struggle thereof.

It was obvious that the 12 resolutions were adopted to take advantage of the fumbling Janata government at the Centre at that time. Among other things, the first resolution said, "The concept of total revolution given by Lok Nayak Sh. Jaya Prakash Narayan is also based upon the progressive decentralization of powers. The climax of the process of centralization of powers of the States through repeated amendments of the Constitution during the Congress regime came before the countrymen in the form of 'Emergency', when all fundamental rights of citizens were usurped. It was then that the programme of decentralization of powers ever advocated by Shiromani Akali Dal was openly accepted and adopted by other political parties including the Janata Party, CPI(M), ADMK etc."

Swearing by the Anandpur Sahib resolution,

"which has endorsed the principle of State autonomy in keeping with the concept of federalism it called upon the Janata government "to take cognizance of the different linguistic and cultural sections, religious minorities as also the voice of millions of people and recast the constitutional structure of the country to enable the States to play a useful role for the progress and prosperity of the Indian people by the meaningful exercise of their powers".

The second resolution called upon the government to

"examine carefully the long tale of excesses, wrongs and illegal actions committed by the previous Congress government, particularly during the Emergency"

and to find a solution to the problems it listed and repeated later many times over.

The third resolution, called the economic policy resolution, stresses "the need to break the monopolistic hold of the capitalists foisted

on the Indian economy by 30 years of Congress rule in India". It included an appeal to the government to make an international airfield at Amritsar which should also enjoy the facility of a dry port.

In the fourth resolution, the Akali Dal "regretted the discrimination against Punjabi in the States of Himachal, Haryana, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir" and demanded that the neighbouring States give it the second language status.

The fifth resolution talks about early settlement of claims of partition refugees in Jammu and Kashmir "even if it involves an amendment of Section 370" and the sixth resolution demands end of discrimination against Sikhs in other States.

The seventh resolution calls for abolition of excise duty on tractors and the eighth calls for amendments in the minimum wages act to help farm labour.

Resolution number nine seeks permission from the government to instal a broadcasting station at Golden Temple, Amritsar for the relay of Gurbani Kirtan.

The tenth resolution seeks amendment in the Hindu Succession Act so that a woman is given right of inheritance in the properties of her father-in-law instead of the father's. It also demands that the farmers be exempted from Wealth Tax and Estate Duty.

A special ministry for scheduled castes is demanded in the eleventh resolution which also appeals against discrimination between the Sikh and Hindu Harijans in any part of the country.

In the last resolution, the "Government is called upon to vacate the gross injustice and discrimination done to Punjab in the distribution of Ravi-Beas waters."

## **Flood of Demands**

In September 1981, the Akali Dal sent a list of 45 demands to the central government. To discuss these demands, the Prime Minister had three sessions with the Akalis, in October 1981, November 1981 and April 1982. Apart from this, there were a number of meetings between government representatives and Akali leaders in which different parliamentary group leaders also took part.

The Akali Dal resolution had been ratified by the Akali Dal president Harchand Singh Longowal. According to the White Paper issued by the government, in October 1981, that is just the next month, the Akalis added another 15 demands to this list, which included unconditional release of Lala Jagat Narain murder accused, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In the first list was included reference to Sikh personal

law in which equal rights of women, as given to Hindu women, are proposed to be reduced. The list of 60 demands, or complaints, as published in the white paper, is as follows:

#### **A. Religious:**

1. Interference in religious affairs of Sikhs. 2. No endeavours by the government for Sikh control over the management of gurdwaras in Pakistan. 3. Apathy towards safety of life and property of Sikhs settled abroad and in other States of India. 4. Forcible occupation of the Delhi gurdwaras in 1971. 5. Applying Land Ceiling Act to gurdwaras in Haryana. 6. Failure to name any train as Golden Temple Express while 15 trains have been named after other religious places. 7. Delay in awarding Holy City status to Amritsar. 8. Not permitting installation of a transmitter in Golden Temple. 9. Not enacting the All India Gurdwaras Act. 10. Not recognising SGPC as the only representative institution of the Sikhs. 11. Usurping the SGPC's authority in the field of sending pilgrims to Pakistan. 12. Interfering in the Sikh tenets and violating the sanctity of Sikh traditions. 13. Illegal and forcible occupation of Delhi gurdwaras with the help of the police. 14. Ban on carrying of Kripans (swords) by Sikhs on national Airlines.

#### **B. Political:**

1. Violation of the assurance given to Sikhs for an autonomous region and instead declaring Sikhs as criminal. 2. Ban on 'Punjabi Suba' slogan. 3. Keeping out Chandigarh and other Punjabi speaking areas out of Punjab and taking away control of water headworks and river water distribution. 4. Denial of internal autonomy to the State. 5. Toppling of Akali governments through illegal corrupt practice. 6. Denial of second language status to Punjabi in neighbouring States. 7. Expressing lack of confidence in Punjabis and disarming them by withdrawing licensed arms. 8. Rejecting the Anandpur Sahib Resolution and following a policy of divide and rule by inciting communal tensions.

#### **C. Economic:**

1. Reduction in the recruitment quota of Sikhs in armed forces from 20 per cent to 2 per cent. 2. Nationalising of the Punjab & Sind Bank. 3. Failure to establish dry port at Amritsar. 4. Grant of minimum central aid to Punjab. 5. Concentration of economic power in the

hands of 5 per cent people. 6. Economic exploitation of Punjab. 7. Increase in prices. 8. Paucity of heavy industries in Punjab. 9. Eviction of Punjabi farmers from Uttar Pradesh. 10. Fixation of land ceiling at 7 hectares, but no ceiling on urban property. 11. Not introducing group insurance scheme in Punjab. 12. Denial of loans to farmers at the rates given to industrialists. 13. Non-remunerative prices for agricultural produce. 14. Procuring agricultural produce at cheap rates but selling the same to consumers at higher prices. 15. Failure to safeguard the rights of Harijans and other weaker sections. 16. Non-payment of compensation to the victims of Indo-Pak wars in Punjab. 17. Non-payment of unemployment allowance. 18. Linking of production to the price index. 19. Denial of facilities to farmers and workers under the Employment Insurance Scheme. 20. Forcible acquisition of urban agricultural land at cheap rates. 21. Ban on the sale of rural land within the 5 kms. radius of the corporation limits.

#### **D. Social:**

1. Non-recognition of the Sikh personal law. 2. Projecting Sikhs in improper way in films and TV etc., encouraging anti-Sikh literature and not giving sufficient time for coverage of Sikh literature on Radio/TV.

In October 1981, the Akali Dal presented a revised list of 15 Demands which is as follows:

1. Unconditional release of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and judicial enquiry with regard to police action in connection with Delhi rally (September 7), Chowk Mehta and Chando Kalan. 2. Removal of alleged government high-handedness in the management of Delhi gurdwaras, holding of democratic elections after removal of forcible control by "one of government's stooges". 3. Restoration of the SGPC's right to send pilgrim parties to Pakistan and deploy *sewadars* for the maintenance of local Sikh shrines. 4. Permission to Sikhs travelling by air to wear *kripans* in domestic and international flights. 5. An All India Gurdwaras Act should be passed. 6. Grant of Holy City status to Amritsar on the pattern of Hardwar, Kurukshetra and Kashi. 7. Installation of "Harmandir Radio" at Golden Temple, Amritsar to relay *kirtan*. 8. Renaming Flying Mail as Harmandir Express. 9. As per the Anandpur Sahib resolution, the S.A. Dal is firmly convinced that progress of States would entail prosperity of the Centre, for which

suitable amendments should be made in the Constitution to give more rights and provincial autonomy to States. The Centre should retain Foreign Affairs, Defence, Currency and Communications (including means of transport), while the remaining portfolios should be with the States. Besides, the Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation. 10. Merger of Punjabi-speaking areas and Chandigarh into Punjab. 11. Handing over of dams and headworks in the State to Punjab and re-distribution of river waters as per national and international rules. 12. Second language status to Punjabi language in Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. 13. Stoppage to uprooting of Punjabi farmers from Terai area of U.P. 14. Setting up of a dry port at Amritsar. 15. A licence should be granted for a new bank in place of the Punjab and Sind Bank, which should be under Sikh control and remunerative price should be fixed for agricultural products by linking it to the index of industrial production.

A close look at this flood of demands reveals that most of them strike a blow at the rights of neighbouring States. Other communities could also join the race for religious rights. There is a danger in this of sheltering a criminal mentality, involvement in the rift among Sikhs, and destroying the already deteriorating economic position of the country. Still the central government conceded many of the demands and tried to implement them, but the Akalis came up with amendments to the accepted demands thus preventing their implementation. Such obstructive tactics prove that the Sikh leaders had no interest in the demands. They only wanted to create panic with terrorism and bloodshed under the cover of these demands so as to achieve their ultimate aim of an independent Khalistan.

The government has indicated its stand in regard to almost each demand. The government displayed firmness in not conceding the demands affecting national interests, communal amity, the economic and social unity. But the Akali leaders, who considered their self-interest above Punjab, the nation and society, were adamant on their demands. The opposition leaders also tried to fish in troubled waters and thus evolving a solution became all the more difficult. What the Akalis agreed to at the negotiating table one day, they would deny the next day. This chameleon-like behaviour made a settlement impossible. Indira Gandhi, weighed under her two responsibilities—national interest and party interest—was in no position to pronounce a categorical judgement. Apart from this, there are so many divisions in

the Akali Dal that if one group agrees to a government decision, the other group declares war on it.\*

## The Sad Aspect

The sad aspect of this whole episode was that, to pressurise the government, the demon of terrorism reared its head in Punjab taking the lives of innocent people. Hit lists were prepared to murder journalists, intellectuals and politicians. Banks and government arsenals were looted, people were waylaid, sabotage began at railway stations, bridges, and canals. Attempts were made to paralyse administration, temples were desecrated to destroy communal amity and it was declared that the Sikhs talking to the government were not the authorised representatives. Burning the Constitution and insulting the national flag was also resorted to.

The other sad aspect of this situation was that the Khalistan-supporting Sikhs abroad, under the leadership of Jagjit Singh Chauhan, started spouting venom again against the Indian government. In this situation no Prime Minister could please the Akalis by giving even a favourable judgement. As long as the Sikhs do not get rid of the imaginary fear of losing their identity, political mischiefs like the Anandpur Sahib resolution would continue. Due to foreign interference, the Sikhs are unable to realise that they have to keep politics away from religion just as the other martial races like the Rajputs, Gurjars, Marathas and Jats have done. If the Sikhs are struggling today to keep their identity, then other martial races also, whose history of sacrifice and bravery is way above those of the Sikhs, could also start similar struggles. There are many *panths*, sects and cultures in this country of the kind that the Sikhs are crowing about. Who could stop them from initiating similar movements.

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\*Eight Sikh extremist organisations were working within the Golden Temple Complex. They were:

1. The group led by Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale.
2. The All India Sikh Students Federation led by Amrik Singh.
3. The Akhand Kirtani Jathha led by Bibi Amarjit Kaur.
4. The Babbar Khalsa, an off shoot of the Akhand Kirtani Jathha.
5. The Youth Akali Dal led by Prem Singh Chandumajuda, an organisation floated by the Akali Dal to counter the AISSF.
6. The National Council of Khalistan led by Balbir Singh Sandhu.
7. The Dal Khalsa led by Sukhvinder Singh.
8. The Akali Federation led by Kanwar Singh.

The Akalis are mistaken in believing that if these demands are conceded they would be able to maintain the Sikh identity. Without these demands if Sikhism could continue under the British and is still continuing in India and abroad, then why the insistence on these demands?

### **Thus Spake Bhindranwale**

The true representative of this diseased mentality was Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who, like a comet, had been the most discussed person in Punjab. His extremist views are presented here from the White Paper to show the real motive behind his demands:

"It should be clear to all Sikhs whether living in urban or rural areas that we are slaves and want liberation at any cost. To achieve this end, arm yourselves and prepare for a war and wait for orders."

"Mind well, in case of any trouble, the muzzles of all the Sikhs in the army and the police will be towards that spot."

"It is very clearly written there\* that 12 bore gun does not require a licence. There is no need of a licence. If you are detected with a 12 bore gun and asked where is the licence, you can well point out, it is according to Anandpur Sahib resolution."

"I beg to warn Sikhs to be vigilant against this trick. Keep on having negotiations but also have your preparations complete ... preparations are to be complete."

"It comes to 35 and not even 100. Divide 66 crores, then each Sikh gets only 35 Hindus, not even 36th. How do you say you are weak?"

"I had earlier directed that each village should raise a team of three youths with one revolver each and a motorcycle. In how many villages has this been done?"

"There is the need to raise motorcycle-groups in order to take revenge against perpetrators of crimes against the Sikhs."

"Those of you who want to become extremists should raise their hands. Those of you who believe that they are the Sikhs of the

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\*Reference to Anandpur Sahib resolution.

Guru should raise their hands, others should hang their heads like goats."

"As far as I am concerned, we want all the demands of the Anandpur Sahib resolution accepted i.e. "Sikhs are a separate Nation (Qaum). That is all I have to say."

### Statements Published in the Press

"A Sikh without arms is naked, a lamb led to slaughter . . . Buy motorcycles, guns and repay the traitors in the same coin."

(*'International Herald Tribune'*, April 24, 1984.)

- ③ "Whoever performed these great feats\* deserves to be honoured by the Akal Takht, the highest seat of the Sikhs . . . if their killers came to me, I would weigh them in gold,"

(*'India Today'*, April 30, 1983.)

"I ask them\*\* to prepare themselves to join the fight for our independence as a separate nation."

(Interview to *'Daily Mail'*, April 12, 1984.)

"The Sikhs are a separate nation and this fact must be recognised. The Sikh must have special status in the Indian union, the state of Punjab must be given the status enjoyed by Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution."

(Interview to the *'Week'*, March 27—April 2, 1984.)

"Frankly I don't think that Sikhs can either live in or with India."

(Interview to the *'Sunday Observer'* on June 3, 1984 published in the newspaper on June 10, 1984.)

### Hand of Foreign Governments

The White Paper has exposed the oft-repeated claim of Akali leaders that they want to remain within the Indian Union. It throws light on the various activities of various extremist Sikh groups abroad proving that their resolve to continue in the Indian Union cannot be trusted. Among these blatantly separatist groups are 'National Council of Khalistan' in Britain, West Germany, Canada and America, 'Dal Khalsa' in Britain, West Germany. 'Babbar Khalsa' in Canada and 'Akhand Kirtani Jattha' in Britain and Canada. The aim of these

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② \*Reference is to the killing of Baba Gurbachan Singh and Lala Jagat Narain.

\*\*Reference is to Sikhs now living in Britain.

groups is to mislead the Sikhs settled abroad, to collect funds for the Khalistan agitation, to defame the Government of India, spread false propaganda about Hindu dominance and to secure all possible help from foreign governments and organisations for the setting up of an independent Khalistan. The Akalis have not expressed any concern over these anti-national activities. Instead they established and maintained links with these separatists. Due to such activities, the Akalis have themselves encouraged suspicions about them.

Jagjit Singh Chauhan, who began his public life in the student wing of the Communist Party, declared an Independent Khalistan government in April 1980, proclaiming himself its president. Balbir Singh Sandhu, who had been living in the Golden Temple complex spreading false propaganda, was declared its General Secretary. In March 1983, Chauhan made an unsuccessful attempt to enter India through Nepal and Bangladesh. On 15 March he made an announcement that a force of 10,000 Sikh guerillas was being trained to fight the Border Security Force. On 13 July 1983 he wrote to his General Secretary Balbir Singh Sandhu to ask Longowal and Bhindranwale to organise a full government and parliament and if they hesitate the 'National Council of Khalistan' would adopt its own measures. He called for observing 'Betrayal Day' on 26 January 1984. Chauhan established links with many members of the American Congress, with the Heritage Foundation of Washington, leaders of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, the JEL organisation of Pak-occupied Kashmir and the governments of America, Canada, Germany, Britain and Pakistan. But in spite of all this, there was no reaction in India's Akali areas against him.

Another Sikh organisation abroad 'Dal Khalsa' has been demanding a sovereign independent Sikh State. It advocates violence to attain its end. According to it,

"only terrorism can help us attain our objective. The 20th century understands only this language."

Britain's Dal Khalsa leader Jaswant Singh Thekedar said:

"Political power does not just drop into the lap of a person, nor is it obtained through 'bhakti'. It is impossible to attain our objective without guerilla war and armed rebellion. Political power emerges from the barrel of a gun. Armed war is the only way to secure Khalistan."

In May 1983, a joint meeting in London of Britain's Dal Khalsa and Vancouver (Canada) based Babbar Khalsa, threatened the Amritsar Akali Dal leaders that if they bowed to the government on any issue, they would meet the fate of the Nirankaris. A pamphlet

distributed on 29 May 1983, bearing signatures of Thekedar Jaswant Singh and 'Supreme Executive Council' member Devinder Singh, says:

"As far as the Sikhs are concerned, the Indian Constitution is a useless document and Dal Khalsa wants to challenge the Indian government in the International Court of Justice and seek the help of the United Nations to put pressure on the Indian government to leave the 'Sikh homeland'."

At a Southhall meeting in July 1983, Thekedar Jaswant Singh said the Dal Khalsa was preparing for an armed struggle in Punjab and many high officials of Punjab are giving it their secret support and even military officials are ready to revolt. In November 1983 Thekedar Jaswant Singh's book 'Khalsa Raj' was published in Britain in which it was said that:

(1) Dal Khalsa was committed to establishing *Khalsa Raj* (2) it had prepared a scheme for religious awakening among the Sikhs and to co-operate with groups who are similarly struggling for independence (3) A new organisation 'Takht Khalsa' will be formed to purify the *Khalsa Panth* and to struggle against the government for freedom. This struggle will be like that of the Jews. The book says that political power can be obtained only by physical strength, guerilla war and armed rebellion.

Babbar Khalsa is the political wing of the Akhand Kirtani Jathha and has for its ideal the Jewish struggle for the formation of Israel and also the Kurdish struggle for independence. The head of its foreign branches is Jathedar Talwinder Singh Parmar who was arrested in West Germany and instead of being handed over to the Indian government, was released. According to Babbar Khalsa, Pakistan is for them a natural and cultural neighbour who is prepared to help them in their movement against the Indian government. Babbar Khalsa emphasises that the Sikhs abroad have a significant role to play for the freedom of 'Khalistan'. That is why Babbar Khalsa has now spread to America, Britain, Holland and West Germany. On 20 May 1983, in an interview to London's 'Desh Pardesh', Talwinder Singh Parmar claimed that Dal Khalsa was responsible for the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, Nirankaris and many others and the sabotage of the railway lines was the handiwork of the Sikh Students Federation of India.

In February 1984, Surjan Singh Gill wrote an open letter to the Sikh leaders of Punjab in which they have been urged to begin operations for the basic aim of the Sikh community, that is establishment of an independent State. He suggested that this was the time to use

suicide squads to change the situation in Punjab and also warned that the community will not forgive any Sikh leader who displays weakness at this crucial juncture.

### **Why Talks Failed**

Because of the above situation, every major Sikh leader of Punjab found himself under pressure, was afraid to speak out the truth, expressed disagreement with government arguments and silently watched the murders going on in Punjab. He did sit across with the government on the negotiating table but had no authority to say 'yes' to any proposal because the terrorists' gun was always on his chest. Even after the marathon talks, the government met with failure not because of Sikh obduracy but because the Akali leadership was submissive. They presented themselves as the guides of the Sikh community but actually they kept repeating like parrots what the terrorists told them to say. Sant Longowal was a liberal and so was Prakash Singh Badal. Even Tohra and Talwandi were not illiberal, but the terrorists pressure made them obstinate. Despite being called a Sant, Longowal kept on telling lies till the very end. The Chief *Granthi* also adopted untruth by declaring there were no terrorists in the Golden Temple nor was there an arsenal. He often met Sant Bhindranwale, Bhai Amrik Singh and Balbir Singh Sandhu but went on claiming these dangerous elements were not present in the Golden Temple.

It is a marvel of the religion-politics combination that the *Sants* and *Granthis*, on whom rested the main responsibility of the *Panth*, shamelessly took shelter behind lies for the sake of petty politics. Who can trust such people? Those submitting to terrorism are cowards, not brave people. Preaching terrorism from the sanctuary of a gurdwara is nothing but cowardice. The leaders of the Akali Dal and the SGPC have proved this with their conduct. This is not the first time in Punjab that a Sant with vested interests has fallen so low.

### **After the Flood**

After this flood of demands, Punjab presented a picture which was as pitiable as after a devastating storm. It was a result of turning 42 major gurdwaras into terrorist camps. Before the army action the terrorists had killed over 500 people. These included innocent passengers, journalists, politicians, teachers, lawyers who were *Nirankaris*, *Arya Samajis*, *Majhabi* Sikhs, *Sanatan Dharmis* and the true Sikhs

who dared to criticise terrorism. After the army action, upto 30 June, 646 people were killed. Of these 92 were army officers or jawans and 493 civilians. The way modern weapons and ammunition were stored in the gurdwaras it seemed there were plans in Punjab to organise massacres on the scale perpetrated by Ahmedshah Durrani and Nadirshah in Delhi. Later information confirmed that the terrorists had complete plans to carve out an independent Khalistan by force and Pakistan was ready to provide full help to them in their designs. The Home Minister had indicated in Parliament his suspicion of foreign hand behind the setting on fire of 37 railway stations and the blowing up of the railway line and a bridge in Ferozepur Mandal. The newspapers had also revealed Pakistani training to terrorists in guerilla warfare.

On 13 April 1984, Mr Suraj Bhan created a sensation in Parliament by disclosing that Pakistan's General Mohammad Iqbal had been to Delhi and had stayed at the Western Court MPs' hostel. It was also revealed that Gen. Iqbal was the real brother of the chairman of an autonomous Indian organisation and he had only a few days earlier been given Cabinet status. The suspicions were strengthened when a Pakistani plane landed in Mukerian. On 25 June, 1984 newspapers said the army was investigating reports that a few days before the army action, there had been a meeting at Golden Temple between Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the self-appointed president of 'Khalistan' Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Ganga Singh Dhillon and a Pakistan army General. The documents recovered from the basement of the Akal Takht indicate that these three had spent the night as guests of Bhindranwale. Sources reveal that these three had briefed Bhindranwale in detail about how the last phase of the Khalistan conspiracy was to be accomplished. It is said they entered India via 'Azad' Kashmir border and then took a regular Air India flight to reach Amritsar and after spending one night in the Golden Temple, returned by the same route.

If Longowal-Badal-Talwandi still consider themselves the guides of their community and defenders of their *Panth*, then Punjab would like to ask them what right did they have to bring disrepute to the gurdwaras, to making a laughing stock of the *Panth* and to invite doubts about the community's patriotism?

### **Enormity of the Crime**

On 22 July 1984, 'Punjab Kesri' published a report with the heading

"The terrorists set out on their killing sprees after satisfying their hunger on helpless women".

This news should lower the head of every true and religious Sikh. The same news was published in other papers as 'Hitvad' and 'Hindustan Times' also. According to this report, the army found in the Golden Temple basement 64 stark naked girls of age around 20. Some of them were pregnant although unmarried. These girls said that when they came to visit the Golden Temple alongwith their parents, Bhindranwale's terrorists seized them and took them away to Guru Nanak Niwas. Their parents prayed to and entreated Bhindranwale and Longowal but to no avail. The savage terrorists were kept in the Golden Temple for 15 days and were given full freedom to ravish these poor girls and then they were sent on their murderous missions. They were provided with not only women, but also with wine and other means of pleasure.

If it is true, this is shamelessness unparalleled in human history.



WAMI Vivekanand said in 1897:

"If you want the well-being of your country then each one of you will have to become Guru Gobind Singh. You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen, but please recognise their Hindu blood, which you shall have to worship. Even if they do everything to harm you, each one of them curses you and uses abusive language, you must always welcome them with words of love. Even if they expel you, then peacefully court death like that symbol of bravery, Guru Gobind Singh. Only such a man has a right to be called Hindu. We should keep such an ideal before us."

This is not merely a call from the soul of a patriot but also an expression of the ideal of Hinduism. It is notable that at the peak of this ideal of Hinduism shines Guru Gobind Singh.

The famous Theosophist, Dr Annie Besant once said:

"After studying different religions of the world for more than 40 years, I have come to this conclusion that there is no other religion which is as scientific, complete, philosophical and as metaphysical as Hinduism. The deeper you think about it, the more superior it seems.

"It is not wrong to think that without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is that land in which the roots of India have gone very deep and if it is separated from that land, it will fall and die like a tree cut off. India has many races and many religions. None of these are related to the long past of India nor is India's nationalism based on them. They will go as they have come. But if Hinduism is finished then India will not remain India. It will become a geographical unit with which the memories of its bright past will be associated. Its history, its literature, its art and its memorials all have Hinduism engraved on them. If the Hindus do not protect Hinduism, then who else will? If the sons

of India will not follow the principles of Hinduism, then who else will? Only India can protect India and there is no difference between India and Hinduism — both are synonymous."

### Importance of Vedas

The basics of Hinduism which are depicted in the Vedas have repeatedly received corroboration in Gurbani. For example, the Gurbani says:

"just as darkness is dispelled if you light the lamp, the moon becomes invisible in the light of the sun, in the same way the darkness of ignorance is removed with the light of Vedas knowledge." (Suhi M. 1)

Again it is said:

"It is the duty of everyone in the world to study Vedas. The scholars must contemplate on the meanings in Vedas. Those who do not attend to the meaning will be distressed. Nanak says that only Gurmukhs, that is those who act on the basis of Vedas, can cross successfully this ocean of life." (Suhi M. 2)

At another place it is said:

"There is an excellent description in the Vedas of eternal truth, but you don't give attention to it and are vainly struggling hither and thither like a mad man. Nanak says those who have turned their face from truth and Vedas knowledge, and are engrossed in untruth, they have already lost in this gamble of life." (Ramkali M3, A19).

Chapter Four of 'Vichitra Natak' says:

जिने वेद पढ़्यो सुवेदी कहाए । तिने धरम के करम नीके चलाए ।  
पढ़े कागदं मद्र राजा सुधारं । आपो आप में वैरभाव विसार ॥१  
नृपं मुकलियं दूत सो कासी आयं । सभे वेदियं भेद भाखं सुनायं ।  
सभे वेदपाठी चले मद्र देसे । प्रणामं कियो आन कै कै नरेसे ॥२  
धुनं वेद की भूप तांते कराई । सभे पास बैठे सभा बीच भाई ॥  
पढ़े सामवेदं जुजुरवेद कत्यं । ऋगवेद पाठ्यं करे भाव हत्यं ॥३

"Those who studied the Vedas were called *Vedis* and it were they who initiated the noble work of *Dharma*. When the King of Madra Desh heard of them, he sent his messengers to Kashi. The messengers met the *Vedpathi Pandits* in Kashi, heard the Vedas from them and invited them to Madra Desh on behalf of the King. The *Pandits* went to Madra Desh and there they saluted the King. The King heard the Vedas from the *Pandits*. He himself

sat in the congregation. The *Pandits* recited from the *SamVed* and *YajurVed*. Then they recited from *RigVeda* with explanations and also from *Atharva Veda*. All sins were washed away after hearing this. The King then rewarded all the *Pandits*."

### Interdictions

Prohibiting meat eating, the Sarang Ki Vaar mohalla says:

"In *Kaliyug* the people's nature has become like that of dogs because they have started killing and eating living beings. After eating dead things they bark like dogs and never even go near *dharma*.

"Don't call the scriptures like Vedas wrong. They are in the wrong who do not contemplate on them. If you consider the Lord as omnipresent and in all living beings, then why do you kill the hen?" (*Prabhat Bani, Kabir*).

"Pilgrimages, practices of rituals and fasts have no effect on those who take intoxicants like hemp and liquor etc and non-eatables like fish and meat."

In Rahatnama *Desa Singh*, the tenth Guru says:

"Those who live a life as ordained by me do not take meat, hemp, tobacco, or any kind of liquor. In fact they do not even look at these evil things."

The *Janam Sakhi* says:

"There should be no goat slaughter in the langar or the kitchen nor should such meat enter these places. All kinds of meat is evil for those who worship God. Because there is only one God in all living beings."

The above samples have been given as examples to prove that there was great respect in the hearts of the Gurus for the Vedas. The Gurus recommended the same kind of pure life free of evil ways as advocated in the Vedas and other Hindu religious books. The Gurus advice includes both the principles as well as the practical side of life. When the tenth Guru went to *Pushkar Raaj* on pilgrimage, the *Pandit* there asked him what was his aim in life and why had he started the *Sikh Panth*. The *Guruji* replied,

"*Panditji*, this *Panth* has been started to protect *Arya dharma*, to protect *sadhus*, *Brahmins*, the poor and the defenceless. This service it is performing and will continue performing always."

(*Janam Sakhi*)

Hundreds or more such examples can be given here to prove the unity of Hindus and Sikhs. The emphasis that Nanak laid on *Naam*,

giving alms, bathing, service and recitation is also not against Hinduism. Work, worship and share all that you have to eat—there is nothing new even in this exhortation. 'Guru ka Langar' can also be taken as a symbol of the socialisation of spirituality—something we have already counted as the speciality of Bhakti Kaal. In this age other saints had started similar practices in other parts of the country. Different provinces may be said to have been practising Hinduism in keeping with the customs of their area. Nanak's doctrine may also be called a new edition of Hinduism in Punjab.

### Neither Hindu nor Muslim

Guru Nanak was a great soul perhaps even in his previous incarnations also. If he condemned religious and social customs it was not as a missionary reformer but as a spiritual saint. That is why his teachings touched the heart more than the brain and attracted Hindus, Muslims and others alike. He had no intention to start his own sect nor did he desire imprisonment of Gurbani in some book form. Guru Granth Sahib was compiled 65 years after his death (1539) by the fifth Guru Arjun Dev. The three Gurus who came before did not even think about it. Just as Bible and Qoran were not compiled by Christ and Mohammad, in the same way Guru Granth Sahib was not compiled by Nanak. The sayings of Mahatma Buddha were also compiled long after his death.

Still Guru Nanak avoided calling himself Hindu or Muslim. He said:

हिन्दू कहूं तो मारिया, मुसलमान मैं नां ।  
पंज तत्त का पूतला, नानक मेरा नां ॥

"If I call myself Hindu I shall be beaten up and Muslim I am not. I am a combination of five elements and my name is Nanak."

The emphasis here seems more on respecting humanity. Because humanity is above both Hindus and Muslims. But there was political expediency also. If he called himself Hindu he would be beaten up because it was the rule of Muslims. But his clear denial of being a Muslim is based on the ancient Hindu tradition of treating all religions as equal.

Apart from the saints of Bhakti Kaal, the Sufis of that age also spread the same message. When Hindu religion mingled with the aggressive Muslims, then this was but inevitable. Seized by this very mentality, Aurangzeb's brother Dara Shikoh studied Sanskrit from the

Pandits of Kashmir and had the Upanishads translated into Persian. Akbar also became a devotee of 'Din-ie-Ilahi' because of this.

In that age there was one Saint Sarmad Sufi whose grave can still be seen near Jama Masjid. His crime was that he did not recite 'Namaz' despite being a Muslim. The *Mullah-Moulvis* called him 'Kafir' (infidel). Then Sarmad said:

बुतपरस्तम काफिरम अज अहलो ईमां नेस्तम ।

"Yes, I am *Kafir*, you may even call me idol-worshipper because your belief is not my belief."

The Mullahs said:

"That is why you are in such a bad shape—nothing to eat, no clothes to wear."

At this Sarmad replied in his typical Sufi style:

शाहे शाहेनम जाहिद च तो डरिया नेस्तम ।

जौको-शौके शोरिशम लेकिन परीशां नेस्तम ॥

"You call me naked and hungry? I am replete with internal prosperity. I consider myself an emperor in my tastes, that is why I am not worried."

Sarmad earlier used to read the 'Kalma', Qoran and do *Namaz* also. But one day some miracle took place and he started praising Rama-Lakshmana like Hindus. Somebody asked him:

आखिर के खता दीदीं अल्लाहो रसूल ।

सरगुप्ता मुरीद लछमनो-राम शुदी ॥

"O Sarmad, what was the shortcoming you saw in Allah and Rasool that you have now become a devotee of Rama and Lakshmana?"

But Sarmad remained engrossed in himself. He started singing the praises of Rama-Lakshmana in Persian while living somewhere near the Jama Masjid. The *Kazi* declared him enemy of God and enemy of Islam. Sarmad did not even salute Aurangzeb as 'Alamgir'. The *Kazi* announced death sentence for him. The executioners tied up Sarmad in chains and executed him before the *Kazis*.

Just as Guru Teg Bahadur became a martyr for the sake of Hinduism, the sacrifice of Sarmad for Sufism is also memorable in the same way.

When the fifth Guru Arjun Dev gave the Sikhs a status different from the Hindus and Muslims, his aim was more spiritual and less

separatist. Guru Arjun Dev said:

"I do not keep vows and fast like Hindus nor do I fast like the Muslims on Ramzaan. I serve only the One. He alone is my shelter. I have only One Lord, and he is my Allah. I have broken with both Hindus and Muslims. I shall not do idol-worship like the Hindus nor shall I go to Mecca with the Muslims. I shall obey the orders of the One only. I shall neither burn incense before idols nor shall I do Namaaz like the Muslims. I shall present my heart at the feet of that All-Powerful Lord. Because I am neither Hindu nor Muslim.

Does this statement indicate the spirituality of *Sufi Sarmad* or is it the ugly tune of separatism?

When the power to grasp the spiritual essence of these words weakened and Macauliffe-influenced 'We are not Hindus' of Bhai Kahan Singh was popularised, then these very words were used to bring out all kinds of worldly meanings on whose basis the Sikhs began to be called a separate race and separate nation. The arguments given for this were very loose and weak. Dr Sher Singh writes in 'Gurmat Darshan' (Pages 49–50):

"Guru Nanak Dev's teachings were described as a new version of Hindu *Dharma* and Guru Nanak was called a Hindu mystic. But by going out of India to other countries—where there was domination of religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Jews and Judaism and Zoroastrianism—he proved that he had crossed the borders of Hinduism and gone out of its circle."

It is a strange argument to say that Nanak had stepped out of Hinduism because of his teachings abroad. Hindu *dharma* had itself gone abroad much before Buddhism and Sikhism. Who had established kingdoms in East Asia like Siam, Anam, Java, Cambodia, Malaya, and Vietnam etc? Hindus only. The proof is available even today. Do the temples of Angkorvat and Boroo Budoor, the Shaivite worship and Sanskrit inscriptions even today in Bali, tell a tale of separation from Hindu *dharma*? Swami Vivekanand had gone out to America to preach. Did he find the need to go out of Hindu *dharma*? Even today when the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramhansa like Swami Rangnathananda or Swami Chinmayananda or Mahesh Yogi or other preachers teach in the West, do they go out of the circle of Hinduism for this reason? Then, except for Guru Nanak, none of the other nine Gurus went abroad. On what basis do we accept their having gone out of Hindu *dharma*?

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## Nanak a True Muslim?

In his craze for separation from Hinduism, Dr Sher Singh went so far as to produce the following excerpt from the book 'Satyavachan' by the Ahmediya community founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmed Qadiyani:

"Baba Nanak was much superior to all the Hindu *Rishis*, ascetics, incarnations, Gurus and saints. The basic truths found in his sayings are not matched anywhere by Hindu Vedas, shastras or Puranas etc. Guru Granth Sahib in fact is an elucidation of the Qoran and Guru Nanak was this way a true Muslim. Gurbani contains all that is said in Qoran Sharif."

What a pity! Pakistan has refused to accept the Qadiyanis as Muslims and barred them from praying in mosques. They have been declared second-class citizens for the crime of not accepting Hazrat Mohammad Sahib as God's last messenger. At the instance of the same prophet of Qadiyanis Dr Sher Singh has agreed to have Guru Nanak declared a Muslim! Why don't they now refer to Guru Nanak's couplet, "I am not Muslim."

Dr Sher Singh himself concedes that apart from the sayings of the first five Gurus, the Granth Sahib contains the sayings of the ninth and tenth Guru also. (The fifth Guru had counted the *shlokas* in the Granth Sahib and had given it final shape by putting his signatures to it, then how come the ninth and tenth Guru have been included in it?) Apart from this, the Granth Sahib compilation includes the poetry of Jaidev, Namdev, Trilochan, Parmanand, Sadhna, Ramanand, Peepa, Kabir, Ravidas, Dhanna, Farid, Bhikhan, Surdas and Meerabai also. The praise songs of 17 *Bhats* and *shabdas* of Baba Sunder, Mardana, Santa and Balwant also are included. Were these Hindu Bhakta poets and *bhats* elucidating Qoran Sharif?

No Sikh opposed this claim of the Qadianis. But people like Pandit Lekh Ram were still alive. He was himself among the leading Arya Samaj leaders who, like the Sikh Gurus, were ever ready to sacrifice their all to protect Hindu *dharma*. He himself went out on the streets of Ferozepur proclaiming by drum beats that the truth about Guru Nanak would be explained that night. The ordinary Sikhs, and particularly the Sikhs in the Army, were quite upset over the Qadiyani book. They were in a dilemma. If Guru Nanak was a Muslim, then all his follower Sikhs automatically became Muslims.

A public meeting was held at night. Pandit Lekhram produced a string of evidence to prove Guru Nanak a Hindu and made mincemeat of the arguments of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed on behalf of the

Qadiyanis. He never said anything without proof. People wondered how and from where he brought the proofs. A large number of Army Sikhs were present at the public meeting. Pandit Lekhram's explanation gratified them and all their doubts were dispelled. As soon as Pandit Lekhram came down from the dais, the Army Sikhs carried him on their shoulders and for a long time kept joyously shouting slogans in his praise.

How an Arya Samaj leader selflessly exploded such a big conspiracy cannot be understood by the separatists of today!

At the risk of digressing, we feel it would not be inappropriate to relate an incident in this context. Those who want to defame Arya Samaj in order to create a rift between Hindus and Sikhs would also get a good reply.

Once a debate started among educated Sikhs as to what is the shape, from the philosophical point of view, of living being (soul) and Brahma. Are they the same or are they different? The issue was taken to the *Granthis* of Golden Temple. In the absence of the requisite knowledge, they could not provide any explanation. Then it was thought that some Arya Samaji scholar should be called who should be well-versed in Hindu Darshans and other Shastras. Their attention was drawn to the Sanskrit professor in D.A.V. College, Lahore, Pandit Aryamuni ji who was famous for his scholarship. Like Mahatma Hansraj, he also kept a beard, tied a headgear and lived a very simple life. Continuously for a week, he held discourse in the Golden Temple (September 1887) on the deep philosophical subject and only then the Sikh intellectuals' queries were satisfied. After this, whenever the Sikhs wanted to be enlightened on a philosophical issue, they would call Arya Samaj scholars to the Temple and hear their discourse. But all this happened before this storm of separatism.

Will the separatists of today believe that the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Jangjodh Singh, had donated land for Arya Samaj in Sialkot? The bringing of Sufi saint Miyan Meer in a palanquin from Lahore to lay the foundation stone of the Golden Temple is also being adduced as evidence for the separatist mentality. By the same mentality, it is forgotten that the level of Sufi saints was spiritual, where no differences of caste or community exist. It was this same low exploitative mentality by which they brought the Imam of Jama Masjid Shah Abdullah Bukhari to Anandpur and passed a resolution for a separate State in his presence. It is worth considering how this mentality slowly turned from anti-Hinduism to anti-nationalism.

## Anti-national

In his 'Heritage of Sikh Culture', the former Principal of Jalandhar's Khalsa College, Pritam Singh Gill writes:

"The Sikhs have their own culture which is entirely separate from those of all others living in India. Their religious beliefs are different, their heritage is different and their culture is different."

"After the Partition, the nationalistic feeling among Hindus has got linked with their language and religion. Hindi is considered the language of all Hindus, whatever province they may be living in. Openly, or through secret means, they want to impose their religion, their language and their culture on the minorities. They want to crush all other cultures and want to make India a land of only one culture. There has never been a single culture in India, but this tendency has grown since the partition. Nationalism has been attached to Hindi, Hinduism and Hindu culture. This would certainly create rebellions and the country would be divided. The old definition of the unity of language, religion and culture cannot be accepted in the present circumstances. India is a multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-cultural country. Therefore a new appropriate definition of nationalism will have to be prepared. This is the problem before the country."

"Sikhs have their own history, their own land, their own traditions, a developed language, own religion, a special society, duties and their own concept of beauty. This way theirs is a separate culture, which they want to protect.

"The Sikhs are victims of Hindu nationalism. India doubtless got freedom, but the Sikhs didn't. The Hindus left the land of their enemies and came into the fold of their brothers and friends. The same process took place in the case of the Muslims. But the Sikhs left one enemy country and entered another. From the frying pan they fell into the fire. They had to choose one of the two evils.

"Kill the language, kill the culture, kill the community—this is the three-fold strategy of the Hindus. This way India will become a nation of one-language, one-religion and one-culture. This is the dream of the Hindu nationalists. . . . Any non-Hindi speaking person becomes a 'hero' if he starts speaking Hindi. This is a very simple method which requires only a little lying. The Hindus

of Punjabi-speaking areas of Punjab lied collectively in the 1951 census when they declared their language as Hindi and not Punjabi. As a result, till 1966 Punjabi could not get a full Government and administrative status. After the reorganisation of Punjab also they accepted it only half-heartedly so that Punjabi would end ultimately. At every step Hindi is brought forward to stand in competition with Punjabi. This is the condition of a language which is recognised in the Constitution."

"A united move is on to finish off Punjabi as an educational medium. All Hindu organisations accept only Hindi as medium and only Sikh organisations use the Punjabi medium. In a small way the educational institutions are also divided into groups of Hindi-speaking students and groups of Punjabi-speaking students. This division has been started by the Hindus and not by the Sikhs."

"The origin of the problem is that Hindus refuse to accept the domination of any other community in any State. They are first Hindus and only later Indians. The cultural units are at the mercy of their voting power. That is why they are in search of ways to protect their cultural identity. It should not become extinct. In their attempt to protect their identities, two clear mentalities have taken shape, one centripetal and the other centrifugal. This struggle would continue as long as India continues to live in its past, particularly its majority community. Now there is no danger to the rights of the majority community. That is why there is reaction among the minorities against their attitudes. This is a question of life and death. Therefore it is the duty of the majority community now to change its attitude towards nationalism and not try to change that of the minority communities."

Although Mr Gill has not talked of a separate State, but his arguments run like this:

"There is no use saying that India has one culture. Nobody can deny the diversity. But some people say there is unity even in this diversity. This is nothing but self-deception and is merely the faulty thinking of some people."

"Is there any similarity in the religious teachings of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis? None at all. Even the basics are different."

"Is there anything common in language, race and tradition? No."

"How many marry outside their religion? They can be counted on the fingers."

"How many are considered untouchables? Perhaps lakhs.

"Have any people given up their habits of food and clothing? No."

"How many are considered second-class citizens? The majority community can tell."

"India was never one, nor can it ever be one and it should never be one."

There cannot be a more severe attack on India's nationalism, cultural unity and on Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. It is useless to counter each argument of Mr Gill but it is obvious that in his zest for 'We are not Hindus' he has turned to proclaiming "We are not Indians". This is the leadership provided to the mentality of separatist Sikhs and also a distorted presentation of history.

## **New History**

There are other Sikh intellectuals like Gill who are writing history anew in order to prove this mentality as historical. This new history, according to an article by Mr Duggal published in the Indian Express, says that Gandhi and Nehru were not national leaders but were Hindu leaders who were adept in trickery and had betrayed the Sikhs. Jinnah was a farsighted leader and his words had the ring of a prophecy. In this so-called history, the names from Bhai Mati Das to Veer Vairagi and Bhagat Singh have been included only after their death as if their life had no place in national history. It says that in 1946 the golden opportunity to obtain a sovereign Sikh State was lost because Jinnah's offers were rejected without any basis. There is mention in reports of Britain's secret service and the Cabinet mission about giving the Sikhs a separate State (This fact is not known to any other historian except these Sikh historians). According to this history, it was not independence in 1947 for the Sikhs but the beginning of a new phase of bitter struggle for them. The Indian Constitution has cheated the Sikhs in the name of freedom, justice and secularism. The mention of common ideals, common traditions and common culture is an evil attempt to crush the political, social and national existence of the Sikhs and to assimilate them in Hindu fold.

As far as nationalism is concerned, we say that it is wrong to think in terms of Hindus-Muslims-Sikhs-Christians etc. There can be only two categories in a nation—patriots and anti-nationals. It is all the

more condemnable to play politics on the basis of religion in a secular country. Before independence the British linked religion with politics by announcing a communal award and the Congress did so by starting the 'Khilafat movement' in order to appease the Muslims. It was pointless to start an agitation over Khalifas of Turkey in India. But when this move started in order to somehow enlist the Muslims in the national movement, even Gandhiji said that Hindu-Muslim unity was necessary. This slogan of 'necessary' made the Muslims realise their value and they started extorting the price for agreeing to this unity. The Congress and the British went on increasing the bid which ended only with the partition of the country. The Sikhs also started offering themselves to bids. These bids had not been completed during British rule. They betrayed the nation to please the British but even then their masters did not oblige them.

### Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan

There is lot of misunderstanding about the three words-Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan. These words have been linked with communalism and the middle word, Hindu, has become synonymous with the majority community. But unlike other religions, can there be a definition of Hindu *dharma*? Like Islam or Christianity, is it linked to some God-messenger or *Avtaar*, or a book, an ideology or way of worship? Is there some design to mark its all-accepted mysticism? Do the groups and communities that come under the word Hindu, have any common religious, practical or political customs? On the religious level these groups are more antagonistic. Much before Muslim rule they even used to fight each other. But what we call the essence of Indian culture is that despite these differences, its vitality and life force cannot be subdued or destroyed. The very liberality, tolerance, treating of all religions as equal and freedom of thought may well not allow strengthening of its unity. Call it its weakness, but this is its true strength also. This is also the secret of its long life.

Let us take some instances. Panini has given an example of antagonism in his *Ashtadhyayi*. It says that just as the crow and owl cannot pull on together, in the same way a *Brahmin* and a Buddhist *Bhikshu* cannot get on with each other. But history has proved that the two have lived together peacefully and are still living together. Similarly, the Hindus had been told in one of their religious books not to enter a Jain temple even if an elephant were chasing you. But here also history proves that there have been disputes between Hindus and Jains but slowly, over the years, they have learnt to live together peacefully.

If we have to live together, why not live with affection. This progressive cultural awareness is our heritage. This is Hinduism. As a result of this awareness, the opposing sections of Hindus learnt to live together not only among themselves but even with those who had come from outside like the Jews, Persians, Christians and Muslims thus presenting a new philosophy of life. This very philosophy is called Hinduism.

Some scholars have considered the Vedic *dharma* to be different from Hinduism. But the truth is that the Vedic, Shaivite and Vaishnav traditions combined to form the ancient religion which is Hinduism. Just as Jains and Buddhists are its constituents so are the Sikhs. Actually there has been no definition possible of Hinduism on the basis of religion. Yes, one definition is possible. Hindu is the combined name of all those communities, sections and castes who owe allegiance to this country. The association with this geographical unit has given them a community feeling. Therefore, Hindu is not a religious but a geographical definition.

This view is substantiated by the attitudes held outside India. In the Arab countries all those going from India, even if they are Muslims, are called Hindi or Hindus. Even the people of China do not consider Hinduism a religion but a country. The Indian Muslims do not object to being called Hindus when in Arab countries but they object to it in their own country. The same objection has now become a fashion among the Sikhs.

In the beginning, the aggressors coming from the West had used the word 'Hindu' from the geographic point of view only. When they entered this geographic unit, they started linking the word with the religion of this country, because their own political, social, cultural and practical life was based on a religion—Islam. Held by their religious fanaticism they could do nothing else and religious overtones were imposed on the word 'Hindu'. For the aggressors, the people of this country became not merely political opponents but also religious opponents. Because of this feeling, there was great emphasis on separateness. Since then this separateness has only increased. The fact of the foreigners having called the inhabitants of this country as Hindus was also forgotten.

After treating the word 'Hindu' as religion, its geographic connotation became dim. Facing the ignominy of defeats upon defeats, the community itself accepted the new connotation of Hindu. Then the *Sadhus* and saints, with an eye on immediate gain, and to escape the pain of defeat, started saying 'I am neither Hindu nor Muslim'. Which meant that I am neither among the aggressors nor among the victims. I am separate from both. The saints and *Bhata* poets had the noble

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ideal of equality of all human beings before them. At the same time, moved by expediency, the mentality of 'neither Hindu nor Muslim' was born. Defeat had instilled a feeling of inferiority in the Hindu society. To escape this feeling of inferiority some of those whose past was completely linked with Hindus and whose joys and pains were similar, suddenly started calling themselves a separate power and linking themselves with the aggressors.

During British rule, apart from a mental feeling of inferiority, they were struck by the inferiority of colour and looks also. Considering the western civilisation a symbol of progress, they started feeling pride in condemning Indian civilisation, conduct and even Hinduism.

Any person, even after changing his religion of Shaivism, Vaishnism, Jainism or Buddhism etc could continue to be called a Hindu because by this conversion, his country had not changed. Change of religion did not signify any change in his geographic status. But Muslim frenzy changed this situation. After changing his religion from Hindu to Muslim, he did not remain a Hindu, that is he was no longer an Indian. That is why the question of the allegiance of Muslims to this country crops up again and again. Now the Akali agitation has also raised a similar situation. Negating Hinduism, they have come to negating Indianness and even nationalism.

If we address the residents of this entire geographic unit as Hindus then there is no alternative but to accept Hindi as the language of their mutual relationship and contact. Therefore, it is baseless to say that binding Hindu with 'Hindi' is against secular nationalism or that a Sikh, Muslim or a Christian cannot be Hindi speaking. The objection can come from only those who in their feeling of inferiority avoid being referred to as Hindus and Indians.

The separatist elements describe the slogan of Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan as communal. They say that the Marathis, Punjabis, Bengalis or the Malayalees are Hindus but they do not speak Hindi. They forget that Hindi as well as these languages have the same origin. Because of their linguistic and religious narrowness, they challenge the unity of the languages of the entire country. The slogan of Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan has been effective in establishing this very unity. The need today is not to change the definition of nationalism but to understand the correct meaning of words like Hindi, Hindu and Hindustan.

No nationalist will doubt the following words of the late Mohamad Kareem Chagla, a former Education Minister of India and a former Chief Justice of Maharashtra:

"It is Hindu *dharma* alone, whose greatest quality, and which I

praise wholeheartedly, is tolerance. There is no Pope here who issues orders (bulls) for its followers. There is freedom in it of all kinds of ideological communities. You may be a believer, an agnostic or a doubter, you will continue to be a Hindu. In fact it is wrong to call Hinduism a religion. It is a life style, a thought process. With their astute reasoning and subtle logic, the French call all Indians, whatever race or community they may belong to, as Hindus (L'Hindus). I think that this is the correct way of addressing all those who live in the country."

"The truth is that we are all Hindus, even as we belong to different religions, sects or communities. I am a Hindu because I consider myself the child of Aryan ancestors and I am a votary of that culture and ideology which they left as heritage for the future generations."



MOST Sikh historians persistently accuse the Arya Samaj of 'drawing a wedge between Hindus and Sikhs. Sikh leaders keep saying that their religious and political demands are not opposed by Muslims and Christians. Even the majority of Hindus, according to them, are not opposed to the demands. But Arya Samaj intellectuals and journalists lose no time in starting an agitation and succeed in influencing the Government against the Sikh demands which are thus promptly rejected. Indeed a Sikh journal published in English, has gone to the extent of saying that anything published against the Akali demands or their agitation in any paper in any language, and in any part of the country, can safely be attributed to an Arya Samaj writer, or to one who has been influenced by Arya Samaj thinking. Dr Mahip Singh had written in Dharmayug: "Before the advent of Arya Samaj it was the Sikh thinking which created a new awakening among the Hindus of Punjab, and Sikhs and Sanatani Hindus had worked in unison." However it is an illusion created by some Sikh intellectuals leading to a fresh false notion in current politics. Well-known journalist Khushwant Singh had once said: "Because of reformist, unorthodox and progressive views, Sikhs and Arya Samajis should have been the closest to each other, but I am amazed that today they are poles apart."

We will have to find out the reasons for, and the source of, this cleavage. For, until this mental approach is removed, this cleavage and the consequent illfeeling will persist, and that will in no case be to the good of Punjab. Here it becomes necessary to look at a bit of history.

### Before Arya Samaj

Swami Dayanand had founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. He passed away in 1883. "Satyarth Prakash" was first published in

1875. Therefore it would be wholly unjust to blame the Arya Samaj or Swami Dayanand for events that may have occurred before that date.

It will be relevant to recall an episode during Akbar's reign in the 16th century. The Emperor once sent Raja Birbal, his trusted adviser, on an expedition to liquidate the Pathans of Yusufzai. In accordance with the royal command, as he was on his way to accomplish the mission, Birbal imposed a levy of rupee one on every Hindu, and tried to realize the tax at Amritsar. The local Khatri, who were followers of Guru Arjun Dev, and Guru himself told Birbal's officers in clear terms:

As a community we are separate from the Hindus. The tax should not be imposed on us."

Raja Birbal however rejected their plea. ('A History of Sikh People' by Gopal Singh — pp. 177)

On page 312 of Harbans Singh Doabia's "Sacred Nit Name", one finds the following among the tenets prescribed for the Sikh sect:

- A. Don't worship idols, pictures, graves and dead persons.
- B. Don't worship gods and goddesses.
- C. Don't tread the path of yoga and penance.

Then in 1712, one of the Guru's well-known devotees, Bhai Nandlal, said this in a couplet in "Tankhaha Nama":

"Raj Karega Khalsa Aaki rahe na koy.

Khwar hoye sab milenge Bachay saran jo hoy."

Isn't the slogan "Raj karega Khalsa" a proof of something that stood against unity?

Such examples can be multiplied. It is thus clear that the seeds of separation were not sown by Arya Samaj. Separatism had existed in Sikh thinking long before Arya Samaj was born.

It is equally true that this kind of separatist tendency did not last long. Hindus and Sikhs have all along functioned as two wings of the same society. However, when the British established their supremacy over Punjab in 1849, there was a change in the situation. First, they annihilated the Sikhs. Later, when they needed help in quelling the rebellion of 1857, they encouraged Sikh separatism. It should be remembered in this context that in 1855, when India's first census was held, Sikhs were counted not as a separate community but as part of the Hindu fold.

An Englishman, Steinbeck, who had served Maharaja Ranjit Singh between 1809 and 1839, has said in his memoirs that he had seen Amritdhari Sikhs only as part of the strong "iron-chain" of nationalism. It has already been stated in chapter eight how the British broke this "iron-chain", won the Sikhs on their side and succeeded in suppressing the Mutiny.

## Singh Sabha and Khalsa Dewan

Guru Singh Sabha was established in 1873, i.e. a couple of years before Arya Samaj came into being. And this Sabha had the blessings of the British. That is why the aims and objects of the Sabha included a stipulation that it would not indulge in any anti-Government activity. Also, while English officials were permitted to join this organisation, no Hindu could do so! The journals, tracts and booklets which the Singh Sabha published—and their number was not small—carried the announcement that the Sabha's ideal was to work for "God, Guru and Government". To work for the "Crown, Country and Community" (the Sikh community) was the motto of "the Sikh Sipahi". All these publications laid stress only on the (supposed) separateness of Hindus and Sikhs. The attempt was to prove that the Sikh gurus never propagated Hindu ideals and customs; nor the Vedic philosophy or Hindu epics.

Even the sphere of education was not spared. The Singh Sabha introduced the spirit of separateness in this field also. In the farewell address to Lord Ripon on 13 November, 1884, the Khalsa Dewan demanded a separate college for the Sikhs. It was in fact specifically mentioned in the address that the Singh Sabha did not consider Sikhs a part of Hindu society. Dr Ganda Singh himself has said that "Khalsa Dewan people were, from time to time, telling the provincial governors, the governor-General and Queen Victoria through representations that the Sikh Panth was not a part of Hindu society and that the Sikhs should be treated as a separate group, which is particularly in need of help in the field of education."

It is known that many English officials made donations for the establishment of Khalsa College. Its first principal was an Englishman, the president of its council was the Commissioner of Lahore, also an Englishman, while another Englishman, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, became Director of the College. And Khalsa College played the same role in generating the feeling of separatism among the Sikhs, which the Aligarh Muslim University did in the case of Muslim separatism. India's first President Dr Rajendra Prasad, has clearly said in his book 'India Divided' that Aligarh Muslim University had played a significant part in the creation of Pakistan.

It was the Singh Sabha which for the first time trained propaganda squads which succeeded in converting a large number of Hindus to Sikhism in northern Punjab, Sind and urban Hindus in many parts of Punjab. Among the principal preachers on behalf of the Singh Sabha were Sahib Singh Vedi, Kahan Singh Vedi, Atar Singh and Sangat

Singh. It was the Singh Sabha which produced writers like Bir Singh, Deet Singh and Macauliffe who put anti-Hindu interpretations to Gurus' teachings.

The British Secretary of State for India had entrusted Dr Ernest Trumpp of Munich with the task of translating the 'Granth Sahib' into English. And, Dr Trumpp has said in his preface to the book that "in the role of family priests, the prestige and importance of *Brahmins* had not been minimised. Almost all the Gurus had their family priests, although at times the principles laid down in Vedas and Puranas and their teachings had been criticised too." The same Dr Trumpp, writes:

"In accordance with the sum total of his views, Guru Nanak was a complete Hindu. If he had maintained good relations with the Muslims and many Muslims became his disciples too, it was because of Sufism which those Muslims had adopted. This Sufism was nothing but what had directly been taken from Hindu scriptures and classics and their different interpretations which were outwardly clothed as Islam."

H.B. Hudson has said in 'The Great Divide' (page 10):

"Sikhism is only a different form of Hinduism."

Even before the birth of Arya Samaj, the foundations for two different sects among Sikhs had been laid, and their main object was to create among the Sikhs a feeling of separateness from the Hindus. It should be remembered that from the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself, in addition to acquisition of power, the Sikhs had started being drawn towards Hinduism. It was then that Dayaldas (1783-1855) started the *Nirankari* movement whose aim was to save the Sikh traditions from the influence of Hindu customs and rites. They themselves had neither tasted "Amrit" nor sported long hair or beard. They wanted in fact to practise and preach that Sikhism which had been prevalent before Guru Gobind Singh. Their main opposition related to idol worship at a time when the Sikhs had started erecting statues of the Gurus. They were of the view that the worship of any kind of idol or image was irreligious. According to them even Nanak was 'Nirankari' or formless.

Likewise, the *Namdhari* sect too had been established before the advent of Arya Samaj. They also wanted to remove the orthodoxy or obscurantism that had crept in among the Sikhs. The founder of the *Namdhari* sect was Bhagat Jawahar Mal who was popular as Sai Sahib. He died in 1862. But while *Nirankaris* confined their activities to religious affairs, the *Namdharis* evinced interest in the political field also. Their sacrifices for cow-protection and acts of patriotism have been mentioned in Chapter seven. It should be noted that the Singh

Sabha did not like either of these two developments. It was not interested in either removing social ills prevailing among the Sikhs or in cow protection and patriotism. Their only ideal was loyalty to the British. Therefore, this group opposed the *Nirankaris* and *Namdharis* alike. Indeed, the latter day terrorism, encouraged by Bhindranwale, had begun with opposition to *Nirankaris*. And, gradually this terrorism went on developing until it became anti-Hindu, then anti-national and finally anti-humanity (the Kanishka disaster is an example).

### **Arya Samaj and Nationalism**

Thus what has been said above is perhaps enough to indicate the course of Sikh history before the arrival of Swami Dayanand on the scene. There was a current of separatism as there was one of loyalty to the British. The British drew both these currents towards themselves after 1857. Among Arya Samajis themselves there were small groups favouring loyalty to the British. But they were unable to dominate the Arya Samaj mainstream. The general mass of Arya Samaj followers was always nationalistic in outlook and intensely patriotic. If Arya Samaj had attached importance only to Vedas, it would have remained a Vedic communal sect. But Swami Dayanand was as great a Vedist as he was a nationalist. During that period many other reformist organisations were born, such as Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Deva Samaj and the Theosophical Society. But they failed to be so popular among the masses as Arya Samaj because the content of nationalism in their creed was inadequate. Arya Samaj always stressed the importance of Vedas and Nationalism in an equal measure.

Looking at Swami Dayanand's thinking from the nationalist viewpoint, it becomes clear that he aimed at the unity of all communities.

By adopting Vedas, he wished religious unity for all sects. Although his mother tongue was not Hindi, he adopted this language as his own and made efforts to unite this multi-lingual nation and mould different communities professing different religious faiths into one nation—to make it one *Aryavarta*. He instilled the ethos of national pride into the masses. As a pioneer among pioneers, who gave the slogan of 'Swaraj is my birthright', 'self-government is better than the best of foreign governments', 'Our religion', 'Our culture', 'Our motherland', 'Our heritage', 'Our habits', 'Our ancestors' etc., he was incomparable. Swami Dayanand could thus never become loyal to the British. And British rule could never accept him. Indeed, the popular belief is that his death by poisoning was the result of a British plot.

Nationalism or patriotism is ingrained in every Arya Samaji. Consequently, he reacts very strongly against any anti-national act. And, that is why Akali leaders say that their demands are opposed neither by the Christians nor by the Muslims or the average Hindu but only by Arya Samajists. As far as thinking is concerned, Arya Samajis are no less extremists. But there is a world of difference between their extremism and that of the Akalis. The aggressive attitude of the Akalis is prompted by their narrow sectarianism; that of Arya Samajis is prompted by nationalism; by the interests of one united India. For the fulfilment of their demands the Akalis take recourse to violence or murder. The Arya Samajis are always ready for the supreme sacrifice in the interests of the nation, for the defence of the country. That is why where the hands of Akalis and other self-seeking opportunists are smeared with blood, the Arya Samajis have shed their own blood for noble causes. Arya Samaj has never produced murderers, it has always produced martyrs.

It was the staunch nationalism of Arya Samaj which had impressed the Sikhs in the 19th century, as a result of which there was amity between them. And it was this amity which had prompted the famous American scholar, Kenneth Jones to describe this period as one of "*Hindu-Sikh bhai Bhai*".

Apart from nationalism, there were other similarities which drew the Sikhs towards Arya Samaj. These in brief, could be described thus:

1. The founder of Arya Samaj had based its principles on the Vedas. It is to be noted that while the Sanatinists supported such practices as "*shraddh*" of dead people, Sati, untouchability, keeping the womenfolk uneducated, child marriage, marriage of old people and sacrifice of animals at "*yagnas*" in the name of the Vedas, Swami Dayanand opposed these practices by invoking the same Vedas. He treated the Vedas as the base of all knowledge. Indeed the Vedas have frequently been quoted in Guru Granth Sahib also. In his "*History of Guru Granth Sahib*", the Dean of Religious Studies in Punjab University, and head of the department of Adi-Granth in Punjabi University of Patiala. Dr Taran Singh has said in his book '*Sri Guru Granth Salibda Salutik Khas*' (Page 31):

"Vedas have been mentioned 330 times in the Granth Sahib. Without the knowledge of the Vedas, which are our traditional base, one cannot understand Guru Granth Sahib. Its roots are in the Vedas. The Vedas are the principal source of complete knowledge. Just as the lighting of a lamp leads to the dispelling of darkness, a study of the Vedas also removes all ills ... only the proper knowledge of Indian spritualism can enable a person

to understand Sri Guru Granth Sahib without this it is difficult to understand the mystic nuances of this great book.”

2. Another similarity lay in his strong criticism of religious obscurantism. At the *Kumbha Mela* in Hardwar in 1867, Swami Dayanand had exploded the base of hypocrisy by preaching for the abolition of idol worship and Puranic evil practices. There is an episode in Guru Nanak's life also associated with Hardwar. When he saw the devotees offering the holy water to the Sun after their bath in the Ganges, he himself started offering water in the opposite direction. When people asked him the significance of this strange act, he said he was irrigating his farms. The people asked him: "How can water from this place irrigate your farmland?" The Guru replied: "When the water offered by you can reach the Sun, crores of miles away, why can't the water offered by me irrigate the fields of Kartarpur, a few hundred miles away."

3. The third similarity pertained to social reform. In those days the social ills prevailing among Hindus and Sikhs were similar—such as child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, casteism, untouchability, etc. It was necessary to remove these evils to make society better and strong. There were Western-educated people in both Hindu and Sikh societies. They thought alike on this subject and considered all these evils as fatal for society.

4. A fourth similarity lay in the danger to the Hindus and Sikhs alike from Christianity. And, leaders of both the communities were alert and ready to remove this threat.

### **Sikh Co-operation**

For the above reasons, the Sikhs gave sincere co-operation to Swami Dayanand when he first visited Punjab in 1877. Rather the credit for inviting Swami Dayanand to Punjab goes to the Sikhs themselves. Sardar Vikram Singh of Jalandhar had heard Swamiji's discourse for the first time in 1874–75 in Bombay. Thereafter he met Swamiji at the Delhi Durbar, and invited him to visit Punjab. The Maharaja of Kapurthala was also a great admirer of Swamiji.

When Swamiji visited Ludhiana on 31 March 1877, he stayed with the most prominent Sikh leader there, Sardar Jayamal Singh. He gave his discourses at the residence of this Sikh leader for 28 days. From there when he went to Lahore, Swamiji stayed with the prominent Muslim leader, Rahim Khan. When the Anarkali branch of Arya Samaj was established on June 24, its first secretary was Bhai Jawahar Singh who succeeded in enlisting 300 members to Arya Samaj. It was at his

instance that many Sikhs like Bhai Ditt Singh Giani, Bhai Maya Singh and Bhagat Laxman Singh etc. joined the Arya Samaj.

On 5 July 1877 when Swamiji reached Amritsar, famous social reformer of Punjab and founder of the 'Tribune' newspaper, Dayal Singh Majithia, accorded him a warm welcome and arranged for his stay at his own bungalow. Swamiji wrote the book 'Aryoddeshya Ratnamala' which contains a gist of his views during his stay there. With the efforts of Majithia, a house was hired for Rs 40 where Arya Samaj was established ceremonially. Its first secretary was advocate Bawa Narayan Singh. After this when Swamiji went to Jalandhar, he stayed at the house of Sardar Surjit Singh and gave discourses at the house of Sardar Surjit Singh and Sardar Vikram Singh. The present Arya Kanya Pathshala is functioning on the land donated by Vikram Singh. When Swamiji went to Ferozepur, he stayed at the bungalow of Sikh leader Sardar Sarup Singh. When on 4 April 1878 Arya Samaj was established in Multan, its first chairman was Sardar Prem Singh. When Swamiji went to Amritsar again, he stayed in the gardens of Sardar Bhagwan Singh. The famous industrialist of Amritsar Sardar Amar Singh had a massive building constructed on two acres land on Manzil Road and a Dayanand Arabi-Sanskrit Vidyalaya was set up there. It prepared many preachers with knowledge of both Arabic and Sanskrit who helped to make Punjab a citadel of Arya Samaj. It needs to be mentioned here that the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh donated land in Wazirabad for Arya Samaj.

When Swamiji began the cow-protection campaign and prepared a memorandum for the British Government with signature of lakhs of people, the Sikhs came forward to take part in it in a big way. Swamiji himself praised Sardar Sarup Singh for his services to the Vedic *dharma*. With the encouragement of Swamiji, Anarkali Arya Samaj Secretary Bhai Jawahar Singh learnt Hindi and corresponded later with Swamiji in Hindi only. Namdhari Sikh leader Sardar Indra Singh gave big support to Swamiji's campaign for cow-protection.

Similarly when Arya Samaj started the *Shuddhi* campaign and thousands in Agra and Mathura rejoined the religion of their forefathers, the Muslim leaders were very upset. Then Akali leader Sardar Lal Singh, who was the secretary of the Punjab Khalsa Sabha, declared:

"The Muslims are over-reacting to the *Shuddhi* campaign. All Sikhs support this campaign and if the Muslims took to some untoward reaction, the Sikhs would be in the forefront to give a fitting reply."

When in 1939 Arya Samaj started an agitation for civil and religi-

ous rights in Nizam's Hyderabad, then the Sikhs co-operated in it fully. Even the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara Committee sent a *jatha*. Sardar Harbhajan Singh of Sant Nagar toured widely to collect volunteers for the *satyagraha*. The Lahore *jatha* was led by the revolutionary Sikh leader Sardar Man Singh Gama. All this was justified in the following saying of tenth Guru Gobind Singh:

जो तुम सिख हमारे आरज । देवो सीस धरम के कारज ॥  
 तृतीय जो नर नारी आरज । हो रहे निज धर्मो खारज ॥  
 पाप कुकर्मन में अति लागे । इसी हेतु हो रहे अभागे ॥

पंथ प्रकाश

"If you are true Arya Sikhs then it is your duty to give your head for the sake of the *dharma*. Those Arya men and women are unfortunate who give up Veda *dharma* and take to sinful activities."

होवे जाते यज्ञ पूजा बदे वैदिक रीत ।  
 होवे जाते देश आरज वैदिक धर्म प्रतीत ॥

"I want to do *yagna* to bring them round so that Vedic ways are revived, the country again becomes 'Arya'".

The 'Arya Patrika' which started in Lahore in June 1885, had as its first editor Sardar Arjun Singh, who was the grandfather of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. He even wrote some books on the principles of Vedic *dharma*. The first significant biography of Swami Dayanand in English was written by Sardar Chajju Singh. He wrote 'Life and Teachings' of Swami Dayanand in 1903 which is even today considered an authentic work.

According to Lala Lajpat Rai's diary, the father of Sardar Bhagat Singh was the manager of Arya Orphanage in Lahore and his sons were educated in D.A.V. schools in an Arya Samaji atmosphere. Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries fired their bullets at the notorious Saunders of the Simon Commission, (who had rained *lathis* at Lala Lajpat Rai) from near the gate of D.A.V. College, Lahore.

### Arya Samaj Co-operation

The *Akali* leaders may keep blaming the Arya Samaj for the present Hindu-Sikh rift, but the Arya leaders have always supported their just agitations. When the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee started an agitation to free the gurdwaras from the control of the corrupt

Mahants, then the law and the British Government supported them because these had become their personal property. The Akalis started occupying these gurdwaras through non-violent *satyagraha*. The British Government let loose atrocities on these *satyagrahis*. When the Akalis cut wood for the *langar* from the garden adjoining Guru Ka Bagh Gurdwara in Ajnala (Amritsar district), a case was filed against them and they were punished. The Akalis started a *satyagraha* over this issue and appealed for support to all the organisations of the country. Many Congress leaders, and Hindu leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, supported this appeal. But the most active was Swami Shradhanand. In response to this appeal he himself reached Amritsar and in his address at the Golden Temple declared that this was not a struggle merely of the Sikhs but that of all Indians. He was arrested during the *satyagraha* alongwith the Sikhs and the magistrate sentenced him for one-and-a-half years. He remained in the Amritsar and Mianwali jails. The account of his jail term he has written in his book in Hindi called 'बंदी घर के विचित्र अनुभव' (Strange experiences in jail). This book reveals that whenever there was a Sikh congregation inside jail, they used to come to him for blessings. Under his leadership Guru Nanak birthday was celebrated in jail in the month of November and that of Guru Gobind Singh on 25 December 1922. (Swamiji had given the epithet of Rajarshi to Guru Gobind Singh). After release from jail Swamiji went to Amritsar where a great welcome was accorded to him by the Sikhs. At their insistence he was taken straight from the station to the Golden Temple where he was asked to address the congregation from the Akal Takht.

In 1935 the confrontation in Punjab over gurdwara Shahid Ganj shook the entire Sikh society. This case remained pending in the Lahore High Court for a long time and later went up to the privy council. Famous barrister Dewan Badridas, who was the chairman of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha Punjab for a long time, fought the case on behalf of the Sikhs with such force and ability that in the end the English judge had to decide the case in favour of the Sikhs. To celebrate this victory, Rai Bahadur Badridas was invited to the Golden Temple and given a tremendous reception. He was also honoured with a *saropa*. When the Sikhs tried to present him with a fee of Rs 30,000, he refused it, saying:

"I have only done my duty in helping to return to our community the memorial of our ancient martyrs. How can one accept fees for this?"

## The Rift

The question is, if there was so much amity between the Sikhs and Arya Samajis, then what caused the rift?

We have mentioned above the two separate waves that were current before the formation of Arya Samaj. As the co-operation between the Arya Samaj and the Sikhs increased, the said two currents of Sikhism began to weaken before this national mainstream. How could British imperialism tolerate this? They took recourse again to their "divide and rule" policy and they started furthering the game they had started playing after 1857. They made great efforts to win over the loyalty of both the Sikhs and the Arya Samajis. Their tricks failed to win over the Arya Samajis. Then they turned their attention to the Sikhs. Here they found the black sheep because separatist movements were already on among them.

When in 1899 the Land Alienation Act was passed, the tax rise on canal water affected the educated urban Hindus of Punjab and introduction of stiff laws in new canal settlements turned the village Sikhs against the administration. Punjab echoed to the patriotic agitation of '*Pagri Sambhal Jatta*' (Save your turban, O Jat') The leaders of this agitation were Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh, an uncle of Bhagat Singh. The British Government sentenced them to exile.

To crush this agitation, the British prepared a section of loyal Sikhs and provided special protection and facilities to Sikh religious institutions which supported the British empire. A significant role was played in this by the Chief Khalsa Dewan. While loyalty for the British began to increase among Sikhs, the Arya Samajis were declared rebellions. That the nationalism of Arya Samajis was worrying the British is obvious from the number of cases of treason filed against them at several places. Finding almost all the leaders of Arya Samaj connected in some way or the other with the revolutionaries, the British Government even thought of banning the Arya Samaj. But such steps would have only increased the rebellion among the masses against the Government. The number of registered Arya Samajis may not have been very large, but their influence on the urban intellectuals and the village folks was much greater than their number. That is why the Government gave up the idea of banning the Arya Samaj. The elder son of Swami Shradhanand, Harish Chandra, went abroad with the famous revolutionary Raja Mahendra Pratap and disappeared from there. Balraj (son of DAV movement founder Mahatma Hansraj),

Ranvir (son of College Party leader Lala Khushal Chand Khursand) and Virendra (son of Gurukul Party leader Mahashaya Krishna) were charged with taking part in the Delhi and Lahore Conspiracy Case and sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment each. In such a situation it was not unnatural for the British to consider the Arya Samaj a rebellious organisation.

It was also a testing time for the Arya Samajis. When a case of treason was started against the Arya Samajis in Patiala, they were expelled from Patiala State proving that they had earned the ire of Patiala King as well. Nabha King Hira Singh was an admirer of the Arya Samaj work of social reform but he could not tolerate their anti-British propaganda. Perhaps he was under the influence of Macauliffe's imaginary forecast which had guaranteed a prosperous future for the Sikhs in co-operation with the British. Therefore he would not admit any Arya Samaj preacher into his State lest they provoke the masses against the British Government. To prove themselves more loyal than the British-area Sikhs, these Sikh-ruled States fanned the spirit of separatism planted by the British Government. The author of 'We are not Hindus' Sardar Kahan Singh had been the tutor of Nabha King Ripudaman Singh and till the end of his life was receiving financial help from the State.

After the arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai, in order to escape the ire of the British, many timid Arya Samaji Government servants had their names removed from Arya Samaj registers and broke with it. Being an Arya Samaji was enough to be harassed by the police. Some people even demanded expulsion of Lala Lajpat Rai from the Arya Samaj. But at this time Swami Shradhanand revived their morale. He invited leading pillars of the British rule like Ramsay Macdonald, Lord Chelmsford the viceroy and Sir James Meston and India-lovers like Dinbandhu C.F. Andrews to the Gurukul Kangri Vishwa-vidyalaya and thus stall the British anger against Arya Samajis.

The British tried to win over both the Arya Samajis and the Sikhs. The Sikhs were taken in but not the Arya Samajis. Still the nationalists among the Sikhs and the Arya Samajis maintained cordial relations. The arrest of Sardar Ajit Singh along with Lala Lajpat Rai is a case in point. It can be said that the Sikhs who remained in touch with the Arya Samaj could not be shaken from nationalism. The others were involuntarily swept away in the wave of British loyalty and communalism. It is not fair to blame the Arya Samaj for their flowing and murging in this current.

It was because of this separatist feeling that in 1905 idols of Hindu

gods and goddesses were removed from the Golden Temple. The intention of the Golden Temple founders is clear from the fact that they did not call it a gurdwara but a temple—Golden Temple and Hari mandir (temple). But the separatists could not tolerate this. The Hindus then made a separate Durgiana Mandir which was considered a rival of the Akal Takht. With the efforts of Nabha King Ripudaman Singh, the British Government passed an Anand Marriage Act in 1909. This was an important step in separating the two communities. Before this the Sikh marriages were also performed in the Hindu way.

An economic issue for separatism was also prepared. The founder of 'Tribune', Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, was a famous nobleman. He had set up the 'Tribune' to propagate his liberal and reformist views. He had no children. Shortly before his death, according to the Hindu Succession Act, he left some property in the name of his wife and formed a trust with the rest to carry on his social work. In September 1893, after his death, his wife and other relatives took the will to court objecting strongly to its provisions. The relatives argued that he was a Sikh and not a Hindu and thus he did not have the right to offer his property to a trust according to the Hindu Act. The will was challenged in the High Court. The court deliberated over the issue whether the Sikhs are Hindus or not. Ultimately, the court ruled that Sardar Majithia was a Hindu. This judgement provoked a great debate in the Sikh society and it was a major issue in the newspapers of that time.

Arya Samaj member Jagat Singh wrote in his book 'Risala Prakash' in those days that in the sixteenth century, Guru Nanak freed Hindu dharma from its evil customs. The same task now the Arya Samaj is doing after hundreds of years. Amritsar's Bawa Narayan Singh and Lala Thakur Das wrote a book called 'Sikhs are Hindus'. From the other side Sardar Kahan Singh wrote a book 'We are not Hindus' to prove the Sikhs were different from Hindus.

## Two Main Allegations

Two main allegations are laid at the door of Arya Samaj for the present state in Punjab. The first that Swami Dayanand had criticised Sikhism in his 'Satyarth Prakash' and second that the Arya Samajis, although speaking Punjabi at home, declared Hindi as their mother tongue in the census. A reply to both these allegations is necessary.

The first edition of 'Satyarth Prakash' was published in 1875. In the beginning when the Sikhs joined the Arya Samaj, they took no objection to the criticism whereas the Jains filed a case against Swami

Dayanand in 1882 for having criticised the Jain *dharma*, thus hurting their religious sentiments. There was no such complaint from the Sikhs. But when with British instigation, a separatist feeling was generated among the Sikhs, they started objecting to it. Guru Nanak also criticised the yogis of Kailash-Mansarovar and the external rituals of the *Pandas* of Hardwar and Jagannath Puri. Even otherwise, when a new *Acharya* comes, he criticises the previous *Acharyas*. If he doesn't do so, how can he establish his new creed? The kind of miracles claimed for Nanak in books like 'Suraj Prakash' and 'Nanak Chandrodaya' cannot be believed even by any impartial Sikh intellectual. How could a logician like Swami Dayanand accept it? Swamiji praised Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh for protecting the Hindu nation during their time. He has even favoured the 'Panch Kakars', but only for the purposes of war. He did not approve of it as a part of daily life and religion. He considered bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib, making offerings and taking vows as another form of idol worship.

Everybody knows that Guru Nanak did not know Sanskrit. But nobody has tried to find out what is written in those Vedas which are referred to so often in the Guru Granth Sahib. Swami Dayanand himself did this work. Therefore every Veda lover, including Sikhs, should be grateful to him.

It is relevant to quote from Swami Shradhanand's book "Life of Arya Pathik Pt Lekhram" (page 98, 99) written about 70 years ago:

"Once, while travelling by train he happened to be in the company of an *Udasi Sadhu*. During the discussion, the *Sadhu* accused Swami Dayanand of being critical of *Sadhus* and said: "Dayanand has in his writing called Guru Nanak arrogant. This does not behove a *sanyasi*." Pandit Lekhram started to explain to that *Udasi Sadhu* with great affection: "Look, Swamiji has repeatedly praised the intention of Guru Nanak. Yes, at times his criticism of the Vedas he could not tolerate and finding him doing so without ever having read Sanskrit, he called it arrogance." Pandit Lekhram tried very hard but that *Sadhu* was not willing to understand. Instead he started making a great deal of noise. Then Pandit Lekhram shouted at the top of his voice, "What if I show you how Baba Nanak has himself said that he was arrogant?" The *Udasi Sadhu* was stunned at this. Pandit Lekhram read a couplet from the *Granth* of the Sikhs in which, alongwith a couple of other weaknesses, the word denoting arrogance was also mentioned. At this the *Udasi Baba* was floored

and said, "This is his humility. It does not actually mean that he was arrogant."

Ready-witted Pandit Lekhram then recounted the names of ten hated sins and asked, "Why hasn't Guru Nanak confessed to these sins? Guru Nanak was a true man and also a devotee of God. He did not mention the shortcomings which I attended to because he did not have them. He had only two or three weaknesses to get rid of which he used to pray to the Lord. You may consider your Guru whatever you may like but we consider him a lover of truth and devotee of God."

The Udasi again wanted to say something but the 'Arya Pathik' put in the last word saying, "That's all, sir, I consider it a sin to talk to you. You are a Guru calumniator." After this the Udasi's lips were sealed."

Rishi Dayanand has given the following excerpt in 'Satyarth Prakash':

वेद पढ़त ब्रह्मा मरे चारों वेद कहानी ।  
सन्त की महिमा वेद न जानी ॥  
नानक ब्रह्म ज्ञानी आप परमेश्वर ॥

The second major charge is that this excerpt is found nowhere in Guru Granth Sahib. If this excerpt is not there, then the criticism is also useless.

It is correct to say that the relevant quote does not occur in Guru Granth Sahib, but Swami Dayanand had not read Gurmukhi nor had he studied Guru Granth Sahib. Whatever he was told he took down and incorporated in Satyarth Prakash. Maybe this couplet was not there in Granth Sahib, but being so very popular it reached Swamiji and because to this he did not find it necessary to check its authenticity. It usually happens. There is another couplet which is though popular but not found in Granth Sahib. That is —

करे करावे आपे आप ।  
मानुष के कुछ नहीं हाथ ॥

Secondly, the said excerpt is not there in the Granth Sahib in the order described, but there are synonymous words indicating that meaning. This occurs in two parts. The similar meaning is indicating in the following two couplets:

(क) नाभि कमल ते ब्रह्मा उपजे वेद पढ़ि मुखि कंठ सवार ।

ताको अन्त न जाई लखणा, आवत जात रहे गुवार ॥

— गुजरी महला १, शब्द २

(ख) सनक सनंदन अन्त नहि पाइआ ।

वेद पड़े पड़ि ब्रह्मा जनम गवाइआ ॥

— राग आसा कबीर, शब्द १०

'वेद पढ़त ब्रह्मा मरे', and 'वेद पड़े पड़ि ब्रह्मा जनम गवाइआ' 'आवत जात रहे गुवार' are different in words but meaning is the same.

The second part is 'Charon Veda Kahani'. The same meaning is indicated by the following words:

वेद कतेब इफतरा भाई । दिल का फिकर न जाई ॥

— तिलग कबीर जी, शब्द १

In this couplet Vedas are called 'Iftara'. *Iftara* means mere imagination (Gurmat Prabhakar p 648). Apart from this, Pt Tara Singh has said:

“इफतरा अ.। बहुतान। बहकाव यथा-वेद कतेब इफतरा भाई.”

“Sam Veda and other Vedas produce doubts with contradictory words. The doubts of the mind cannot be removed without a complete Guru” (Gurugirarth Kosh, pp 116)

Thus, while it is true that Satyarth Prakash couplets are not contained in Guru Granth Sahib, the meaning they signify can be obtained at several places.

At this some people say that if the relevant extract is not there in Guru Granth Sahib, then why isn't it omitted from the Satyarth Prakash?

The author of Satyarth Prakash was Swami Dayanand. If during his lifetime somebody had drawn his attention to it, then this lover of truth and discarder of the false would certainly have removed it. Only the author has the right to make changes in his writings. The author has been dead more than 100 years ago. Now no one else has the right to make such changes. What can be done is to provide a footnote below this extract saying that this couplet does not occur in Guru Granth Sahib in that form. Along with it the words that do describe such a meaning should also be put there.

Even then some people insist that since this portion does not figure in the Granth Sahib, it should be removed. The question then arises if somebody has written something, and that is not correct, then its removal should apply only to Satyarth Prakash or to every other

such books also? If this is to apply only to Satyarth Prakash, then it will be totally unfair. The following lines occur in Guru Granth Sahib itself:

गैंडा मारि होय जग कीए देवतियां की बाणे ॥

- राग मलार महला १, बार २५

"The nature of the Devas is such that they do havana by killing rhinoceros". *Brahmin Granthas* like *Shatpath*, *Shrauta Sutras* like *Katyayan*, mention 'Ajamedh', "Ashvamedh" and "Gomedh" but nowhere ever has any reference been found to 'Gainedmedh' yagna. Should this reference therefore be removed from the Granth Sahib?

The second reference is about Hiranayaksha. Granth Sahib says—

दुर्मति हिरणाखस दुराचारी  
प्रभु नारायण गरब प्रहारी ।  
प्रहलाद उधारे किरपाधारी ।

- गौड़ी अष्ट पदियां, महला १

हिरणाखस नखी विदारिया ।  
प्रहलाद लोआ उबारि ॥

- राग भैरव, महला ३

In the description about *Avatars* in 'Dasham Granth', the story of Prahlad is given in detail. It says that God took 'Avatar' as 'Narsingh' and killed Hiranayaksha and anointed Prahlad as the King. The story in its original shape figures in the Puranas. According to Bhagwat Purana, Prahlad's father was Hiranakashyap. Hiranayaksh was only his brother. The 'Narsingh' Avatar had killed Hiranakashyap and not Hiranayaksh. The version in Granth Sahib is therefore against the Puranas. If now somebody says that the 'Gained maar' and 'Hiranayaksh' version should be deleted from the Granth Sahib, will anybody be ready for it? When Ram Rai had changed the couplet "Mitti Mussalman Ki Pere Pai Kumhar" to "Mitti Beiman Ki" that is, he had substituted the word 'Beiman' for 'Mussalman', then Guru Har Rai had told him not to show his face again and also excluded him from the Guru lineage. When Guru Gobind Singh gave initiation to the *Khalsa*, he ordained that they refrain from 'Rotl-Beti' links or any other relationship with the Ramrais. One Bhai Mani Singh had not changed the excerpt in Granth Sahib, but only changed the sequence. He was accused of cutting of limbs of the Guru's body (*Gurudeh*) and

was punished by severance of his own limbs.

Even after these historical incidents, can one talk about change in the text of great books? If nobody has the right to make changes in the Granth Sahib, then how can anybody claim the right to change in Satyarth Prakash?

### Why Hindi Alone?

Now, the accusation against Arya Samaj is that at its instigation all the Hindus of Punjab declared their mother tongue as Hindi in the 1951 census. It has to be answered in some detail because a great deal of bitterness has been created over this issue.

When Guru Teg Bahadur was asked to become a Muslim, then he had replied thus to Aurangzeb:

उत्र भण्यो धर्म हम हिन्दू । अति प्रिय को किम करे निकन्दू ॥  
लोक परलोक उभय सुख दानी । आनन पाइयत याहि समानी ॥  
मति मलीन मूर्ख मति जेई । इसको त्यागे पापर सोई ॥  
हिन्दू धर्म रखे जग मांही । तुमरे करे बिनसय यह नाहीं ॥

"My answer is that I am a Hindu and I love Hindu dharma. How can anybody destroy it? It provides happiness both in this world as well as in the other world. There is no other religion like it. Only a deranged person or a fool would leave it to become vile. Hindu dharma would remain in the world for ever. It is not going to be destroyed by your efforts." These words convey Guruji's unparalleled devotion to Hinduism. That is why he was called 'Hind ki Chadar' (mantle of Hinduism or protector of Hinduism). Those who call Sikhs as different from Hindus drill holes in this 'chadar'. Like the Gurus' devotion to Hinduism, the Hindus also had great respect for the Gurus. The Gurus gave almost as much respect to Hindi as to Hindu dharma.

At that time the provincial dialects of Hindi that developed were known as Paschimi Hindi, Poorvi Hindi, Uttari Hindi and Dakhini Hindi. In Punjab it was known as Paschimi Hindi or Lahanda. Its script was known as Landa, Takra, Moondla or Mahajani. It was easy to write and was a kind of shorthand. It had one fault that it had no vowel marks. Much of it had to be understood by guesswork. A word like "Ajmer" could also be read as "Aj mare". To remove this shortcoming Guru Angad Dev evolved Gurmukhi as a mixture of Kashmir's Sharda script, Takra and Devnagari. The basis of the alphabet of Gurmukhi is the Sharda script. It has incorporated 19 letters of Sharda script in their original form. There was no Gurmukhi script before that

whereas the Devnagari script has a history of 1200 years. After this Gurmukhi was used only in Punjab and that also only in the religious literature of the Sikhs. Devnagari was however prevalent apart from Punjab, in all other provinces also. Before Guru Angad Dev all the writings and sayings of Sants and reformers were in Devnagari. This fact has even been accepted by Macauliffe in his 'Sikh Religion' (Second volume, pp55)

The very first book of Gurmukhi was the 'Janam Patri' (if it could be called a book) of Guru Nanak. In its original form it was in Hindi and Devnagari script. Guru Angad Dev had it converted into Gurmukhi script. Then also, the script had changed and not the language. The language continued to be Pashchimi Hindi.

What we call Punjabi today is only a wing of Hindi—Paschimi Hindi. If the Muslims had not given the Persian name of 'Punjab' to this area known variously in ancient times as Sapt Sindhu, Madradesh, Takkadesh, Valhik and Panchnad, then according to famous linguist Grierson, this language would even today have been called 'Lahenda' or 'Pashchimi Hindi'. But because of their communal feelings, the Sikhs linked Punjabi and Gurmukhi with their religion and put it up in confrontation with Hindi and Devnagari. No Hindu or Arya Samaji is opposed to Punjabi, which is in fact a dialect of Hindi. The Hindus of Punjab have as much affection for it as the Sikhs. When two Punjabis meet in India or outside India, they take pride in conversing in Punjabi only. This pride is the heritage of all punjabis. The controversy begins when Punjabi is tied up with Gurmukhi.

Till the time of Akbar, all the work was done in Hindi and Devnagari. Akbar's Minister Todarmal replaced it with Persian script. But even at that time Goswami Tulsidas raised the prestige of Hindi and Hindus by writing his Ramayana in Hindi. That tradition is continuing till today in Punjab. Even at the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the language of administration and courts was not Punjabi but Persian. The only literary output was 'Heer' by Waris Shah and it was written in Persian. This very Persian 'Heer' has been included as a textbook for examination in Punjabi. The Heer of Damodar is considered the original and proven one. This Damodar was the Patwari of Jhang-Sial and was closely related with Heer's father's family. In the marriage of Heer he had joined in feeding the Baratis. A Muslim has written about him:

दामोदर नामी खुशकलामी, हिन्दी ख्वानी, ताजा बयानी, दोहराबन्दी, शेरे बुलन्दी, रास्तगो,  
सफागो, साकन झंग सियाल, दर शेर हिन्दी साहिब कमाल, मुतरज्जम तरजमान, हर  
किस्म दास्तान । (Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal Letters. Vol. XIX, 1953, pp 123)

In this Damodar has been called an expert at writing Hindi poetry and skilled in writing all kinds of stories. The meaning is also clear that what is called Punjabi today used to be called Hindi then and was written in Persian. This situation continued till the formation of Pakistan. The 'Puran Bhagat' of Kadar Yaar, 'Yusuf Julekha' of Maulvi Ghulam Rasool and 'Sohni Mahiwal' by other poets was written in Persian only. Shah Muhammad had written the historic account of the Sikh-British in Persian only. Even today the Punjabi Muslims of Pakistan use Persian as their script and not Gurmukhi. In the 16 districts of West Punjab, the Punjabi language is written in Persian script. Before the Partition, many Hindus and Sikhs used to read Japuji and Sukhmani in Persian. But now the Sikhs say that Punjabi is only what is written in Gurmukhi script! This way they have attached Punjabi, which was clear a dialect of Hindi, to Gurmukhi giving it a communal colour. Languages like Brajbhasha, Avadhi, Bundelkhandi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Garhwali, Gorakhpuri, Bangru, Pahari and Dogri are all dialects of Hindi and are written in the Devnagari script. Leave alone the dialects, rich languages like Marathi and Nepali are also written in Devnagari script. But the Sikhs, because of their prejudice, have rejected Devnagari. This is the root of the problem. In 1931 Master Tara Singh himself had demanded freedom to write Punjabi in any script. It was being written only in Persian at that time. But today when the same demand is made by the Arya Samajis, they are not prepared to accept it. We repeat that the problem is not Punjabi—which is acceptable to all Punjabis—but what script it should be written in. The Sikhs say it should be written only in Gurmukhi. The Arya Samajis ask, "Why not in Devnagari also?" This question itself is a crime before Sikh communalism.

The same thing happens with Muslim communalism. Nobody is against Urdu. All scholars consider it a style of expressing Hindi. In early British period it was called जबाने हिन्दी. But when the Muslims insist only on Persian script, then popular Indian opinion considers it sheer communalism. In the matter of political ambitions, as well as language and script, the Sikhs are following the footsteps of the Muslim League. Urdu and Punjabi are both Aryan languages of India. They have the full right to prosper in India, but not at the cost of Devnagari. The issue is not of language but that of script. Here also an imaginary fear is the cause of prejudice. The Muslims feel that if Persian script is not protected, then Urdu will cease to exist. The Sikhs feel that if Gurmukhi is not protected, then Punjabi will cease to exist. This is a false fear. Have Marathi and Nepali languages been destroyed by using the Devnagari script? Two excerpts will suffice to

show the importance of the Devnagari script:

"The Sanskrit alphabet (Devnagari) of India and its system of apt sounds and pronunciation is so scientific, orderly and so superior to the alphabets prevalent all over the world that we can take pride over it as a miraculous invention of our forefathers."

— Veer Savarkar

"The Devnagari script is more important than the Hindi language. Nepali and Marathi language is also written in this script. Gujarati also uses this script (as in Baroda State). The Devnagari alphabet has been the alphabet of India right from the beginning. Devnagari script is the chief script of Sanskrit. Through the medium of Sanskrit, Devnagari may be said to be an international script. Wherever Sanskrit is studied, whether in London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Afghanistan or Russia—they all have printing presses for Devnagari where Sanskrit books are published in a more beautiful and purer style than the one used in India." — Famous Oriental scholar and MP, Dr Raghuvir

The entire Hindi literature is directed to the masses. It is the literature of people's religion, people's sentiments and people's language. Because of this association of Hindi with the masses, the Gurus found it proper to encourage Hindi poets and to popularise Hindi poetry. They themselves adopted Brajbhasha as the vehicle of their views. The Gurus popularised in Punjab the *Bhakta* poets from the rest of India and encouraged their talented disciples to write poetry in Hindi. There were 52 Hindi poets in attendance of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Prof Sant Singh Sekhon says about the language of Guru Granth Sahib: "Its language is a mixture of the ancient, the Sadhu language and Rajasthani-Brijbhasha".

Dr Trumpp and Cunningham openly admit that:

"The chief importance of the Sikh Guru Granth lies in the linguistic line, as being the treasury of the Hindi dialects. (Preface, page VIII)

"The language in which the whole work is written is not so much the old Punjabi dialect as the old Hindi. (History of Sikhs by J.D. Cunningham, 1894, page 346).

Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji's statement in this connection is also worth noting:

"The ancient corrupted form of Brajbhasha was very popular in Punjab but the poets of Punjab found Hindi or Hindustani more suitable. The religious poetry of the Sikh Gurus is an evidence of this. It is a mixture of Punjabi-Hindustani-Brijbhasha." (Indian

Aryan languages and Hindi, page 221)

The ex-vicechancellor of Delhi University and ex-speaker of Delhi Assembly Shri Gurumukh Nihal Singh is also worth quotable in this context. He says:

“The language of the Adi Granth is described as Sant-Bhasa — which was used by medieval Indian saints throughout the country — although varying from region to region, being influenced by the regional language or the dialect. Thus we find in Adi Granth songs in various Indian languages. Besides Punjabi in its main forms, Eastern, Lehndi and Dakhni and Hindi — Eastern and Western, the Adi Granth contains some songs also in Marathi, Persian and a mixture of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa called Sahaskriti.”

Giani Gurmukh Singh writes about the ‘Dasham Granth’;

वाणी दशम ग्रन्थ की भाई । आप रची कुछ गुर रचवाई ॥  
पर्व अठारह भारत करे । उपनिषदां पुराण बघरे ॥  
गोविन्द गीता सहित उपदेश । इत्यादिक पुस्तक सविशेष ॥  
संस्कृत ते हिन्दी भाषा । रचवाये गुरू रचे विलासा ॥

पंथ प्रकाश

In this way, the Guru Granth is filled with Hindi and its dialects. Whose insistence is it to tie it up with Gurmukhi and not to recognise Devnagari script as Punjabi (Pashchimi Hindi). That of Sikhs or the Arya Samajis?

There is another reason for the Arya Samajis giving importance to Hindi and Devnagari. The administrative language of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is Hindi, but the Muslims of that area declare their language as urdu even if they speak Awadhi, Maghadhi and Bhojpuri at home. The Hindus who speak same languages write their mother tongue as Hindi. The reason is the tradition in North India to write the language of their religious books as their mother tongue in the census. Just as it is natural for Muslims to write their mother tongue as Urdu because their religious books are in that language; in the same way it is natural for Hindus to write their mother tongue as Hindi because their scriptures are in Hindi.

There is another—a third—reason for writing Hindi as their mother tongue. Arya Samaj considers Hindi as a means of uniting India. The latest biographer of Swami Dayanand, Prof Jordens of the National University of Canberra, Australia, writes:

“Wherever Swamiji went, from Benaras to Bombay and to Lahore, he made use of Hindi. For him Hindi was an agent to

triumph over the fissiparous tendencies of India. The unity of different provinces and races could be strengthened with it. Once he was asked when would India recapture its past glory and prosperity. His reply was that only when there is unity of religion, language and aims. It is clear from this that Swamiji considered the unity of language necessary for national unity."

From this point of view, Swamiji considered it necessary for everybody to study Hindi. Once somebody asked his permission to translate his books into Urdu. He replied with great affection:

"My eyes are thirsting to see the day when all Indians from Kashmir to kanyakumari would start speaking and understanding one language. Those who would really want to know my views, would consider it their duty to learn Arya Bhasha (Hindi)."

Not alone Swami Dayanand, all national leaders dreaming of the unity of India, even when they belonged to non-Hindi areas, have given special importance to Hindi. Swamiji himself was born a Gujarati. He was a scholar of Sanskrit, and he did not even know Hindi. Brahmo Samaj leader Keshab Chandra Sen drew his attention to the significance of Hindi in the national context. Thereafter he adopted Hindi and wrote all his books in Hindi only. Sharda Charan Mitra of Bengal had thought of one script for all Indian languages and towards this end, he brought out a journal called 'Devnagar'. The pioneer of cultural awareness in Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, had written:

"Only those can be honoured with the name of 'Bharatbandhu' who succeed in establishing unity between the different provinces of India through the use of Hindi. Let everybody make the effort, let it take as many days as possible, and the purpose will be fulfilled."

— (Bangadarshan, fifth volume)

Mahatma Gandhi was himself non-Hindi speaking but for the propagation of Hindi he formed a national language propagation committee (Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Samiti) and set up its branches in every province. He sent his own son (Devdas Gandhi) to Madras for Hindi propagation.

It was the result of the campaign of these very non-Hindi speaking national leaders that, after independence, Hindi was given the status of national and administrative language in our Constitution. Hindi is the chain which joins all the States of India. Hindi is the vehicle of our nationalism. If the Arya Samajis or Hindus of Punjab declare Hindi as their mother tongue, the reason is that they feel a sense of unity with

other States and consider Hindi to be the medium of expressing that unity. Hindi is not merely a language but a symbol of national pride. While it is the mother tongue of Punjabi Hindus, it is also the strong means of strengthening "*Bharat Takht*". The craze for Sikh domination plagues only those whose narrow vision can see only Akal Takht and not *Bharat Takht*. They see only Arya Samaj as a hurdle in the fulfilment of their crazy dream, that is why the ire against Arya Samaj.

In the matter of extreme views and their enforcement, the Arya Samaj does not lag behind. But Sikh extremism is for the expansion of their communalism, whereas Arya Samaj extremism is for spreading national unity. The Sikh pertinacity takes them towards terrorism, while the Arya Samaj persistence rouses them to self-sacrifice. There is an ego of the Sikhs and an ego of the Arya Samajis. There is only one way to avoid a clash of these two egos. Every community, every race, sub race or group must keep the nation above everything and must be ready to give their all for the sake of the nation. This is true nationalism. Every voice, not for the sake of the domination of a particular group or for a special status, but in the interest of the entire nation, should say:

इदं राष्ट्राय स्वाहा । इदं न मम ॥

Whatever, I have, I hereby offer it to the nation. All this is for the country and not for me.

If the Sikhs are the armour of Punjab, the Arya Samaj is its knowledge. If both these arms, carrying weapons and knowledge, devote themselves to national interest, then it can be said in the words of ShrimadBhagvad Gita:

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।

तत्र श्री विजयो भूति ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥

"Where there is the knowledge of the crown of Yogis, Krishna, and the skill in weapons of Arjuna; the intellectual power as well as physical power (*Brahmbal* and *Kshatrabal*) have victory, prosperity and pleasure will be present. This is a permanent law."

May Punjab be blessed with both these powers, this is our hope and wish.



INDIRA Gandhi *Murdabad*, Indira Gandhi *Murdabad*. The Committee against Army Action had called a meeting at New Delhi's Vithalbhai Patel House. Its chairman was famous journalist Kuldip Nayar and among the speakers were V.M. Tarkunde, Surendra Mohan, George Fernandes, Khushwant Singh, Prof Mahip Singh and Jaswant Singh etc. The big crowd could not be contained in the meeting hall. Those left out were listening to the speeches through a loud speaker kept in another hall.

The most rousing speech was delivered by George Fernandes. At the peak of his voice when he held Indira Gandhi alone responsible for the wounded self-respect of the Sikhs, he was greeted by shouts of 'Indira Gandhi *murdabad*' from all sides. His reasoning was on the following lines:

"When Sardar Khushwant Singh was the Editor of 'Illustrated Weekly', he had once published an interview with Indira Gandhi. In that account Khushwant Singh said that when he asked her what was the difference between her and her father, she replied, "Nehruji was a person of saintly character; he could forget and also forgive. I neither forget, nor forgive". In keeping with this character Indira could not forget that the Akalis had opposed the Emergency and to protest against it, they had sent 'jathas' from the Golden Temple. Not only Indira Gandhi did not forget, she also never forgave the Sikhs for this. To take revenge on them she kept on inciting Bhindranwale and his associates; for three years she kept overlooking their activities. In a way she permitted a slow poison and increased the disease and in the end through Army action, she took revenge on them for their attitude during the Emergency. The guilty in this entire episode was not Bhindranwale or the extremists but Indira Gandhi alone."

Slogans of Indira Gandhi *murdabad* were but to be expected after this speech. There are other politicians and intellectuals who also consider Indira Gandhi solely responsible for the Punjab crisis and term it one of her tricks to win the elections.

It is true that Indira Gandhi had her own way of working. First she gave the impression as if she had withdrawn into her den from fear. But then she pounced suddenly like a tigress and delivered a total knockout blow on the opponent. But to call this a constant conspiracy for three years is to invest her with prescience and omniscience. Howsoever foresighted, she cannot be termed the controller of destiny or God. Events in the world did not take place at her instance or according to her wishes. Even the greatest of men cannot be considered to be controlling the world. Otherwise, men who thought they could influence the sea and the sky, and names like Alexander, Changez Khan, Napoleon, Nero, Hitler and Mussolini would not have become just a memory in history.

An Urdu couplet says,

“please ask the bee not to go into the garden for it would mean a needless murder of moths.”

When the audience could not appreciate the link between the bee and the bloodshed of moths, the poet had to explain himself:

“If the bee goes into the garden, it will sip the flower sap, convert it into honey, to protect this honey it will build a beehive. When the beehive breaks, honey will come out. Another thing that would come out is wax. Candles will be made of that wax. When this candle burns to give out light, the moths will be attracted to it and will die in its flame. This way the bee is responsible for the death of the moths. Therefore please ask the bee not to go into the garden.”

Those who hold the Punjab problem as Indira's conspiracy are guilty of similar far-fetched reasoning.

### **Never Demanded Khalistan?**

It is surprising that even educated non-Akalis are sometimes found asserting that the Akali Dal has never demanded Khalistan or a separate Sikh State. Harchand Singh Longowal continued saying till the last that their's was not a demand for Khalistan. Bhindranwale himself declared that he was neither in favour nor opposed to the Khalistan demand. “But if Khalistan is conceded, then I will accept it.” These leaders have also been pressing for the acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. No doubt this resolution does not refer to

'Khalistan' by name but what else can be construed from the wordings that, "An autonomous state should be immediately set up in north India where Sikh interests should be recognised as supreme and constitutional guarantee should be given to their special interests" or "All Punjabi speaking areas should be merged to form an administrative unit where Sikhs and Sikh religion should receive special protection". This is only a crudely veiled demand for Khalistan. Therefore, the Government has been declaring again and again that it cannot accept the formation of another autonomous state within one autonomous state. This would be a direct blow to national unity.

### **Aping Muslim League**

H.V. Hudson in an article has proved that the Sikhs, in their wave of separatism, were adopting the same strategy as practised by Jinnah for attainment of Pakistan. In 1976, Hudson read a paper at an Islamabad University seminar in which he made three points about the 1940 Muslim League resolution about Pakistan.

The first point was that at the time of drafting the new constitution, the Muslim League leaders were flexible towards even those Muslims who did not subscribe to the view of Partition, and tried to rope them in into their group.

Secondly, the Muslim League working committee had been asked through a resolution to prepare a definite scheme about the constitution, but it never did so.

Thirdly, the claim of veto over constitutional changes had been made in the name of Muslim India, and not in the name of Muslim League.

In place of the Lahore resolution for Partition, put the Anandpur Sahib resolution and in place of Muslim League, call it the Akali Dal and the situation will become clear.

Hudson had also prepared a strategy for daily use. It should also be put against Akali behaviour. This strategy was:

1. Demand the maximum and be adamant on it till the end.
2. Don't agree to anything without extracting the price.
3. Don't accept a price in terms of future facilities or conditions.  
The price should be in political cash.
4. Let the Congress (and other parties) make the mistakes, but keep your cards close to your chest.
5. Don't let the Congress get away with any political gain which could be shared with you.
6. If for the time being you have to retreat from an extreme

demand, then keep it alive for the next time.

7. If for expediency and bargaining, you have to compromise on your demand, then in the absence of its implementation, deny the agreement, because the next time you will be in a position to gain more; the situation cannot become worse than before. (Qaide-e-Azam, pages 247–49).

## **The Collusion**

The White Paper deliberately did not name the countries which tried hard to give shape to the imaginary concept of Khalistan but there is some evidence which cannot be contradicted. Just as the Akali leaders had been claiming till the last that there were no terrorists in the Golden Temple, in the same way Pakistan's General Zia issued a double-edged diplomatic statement:

“If we had to help, we would have given assistance to the 10 crore Muslims of India (who are victims of atrocities in India). What can we achieve by assisting the 2 crore Sikhs?”

Former Chief Minister of Punjab, Darbara Singh, has exposed the lies of both the leaders.

“During my Chief Ministership I sent to the SGPC the numbers of the rooms in the Golden Temple and the names of the extremists hiding in them and appealed to them to have the extremists evicted from there, but the SGPC totally denied the existence of extremists.”

Even more surprising is the statement of Dr Subramaniam Swamy, who, after remaining a guest of Bhindranwale in the Golden Temple, announced that there were neither extremists in the Golden Temple nor any arms stored there.

Darbara Singh told the Rajya Sabha that the conspiracy for Khalistan was hatched by General Zia together with Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan and towards this end they had met several times. The American intelligence agency CIA also had a hand in it. He declared with great emphasis that he had incontrovertible proof that the extremists had been trained in Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir. Later it was found that the terrorists had been trained at the following places in Pakistan: Narowal, Pasrur and Daska (Sialkot district); Narangmandi, Amenabad and Muridke (Shekhupura district); Jallo Pathana, Burki, Bhagwanpura and Mughalpura (Lahore district); Kohmari and the fort of Attock. General Zia used to warmly welcome the Sikhs visiting Pakistan and encouraged them to spout venom against India. He gave them assurances that he was extremely

concerned about the Sikhs in India.

It was believed that Pakistan hatched the conspiracy to break up India as a reaction to the formation of Bangladesh. It is now learnt that, in fact, such a scheme had been in preparation not in 1971 but ever since Pakistan's first attack on India in 1965. The brain behind this scheme was Britain and Pakistan was to implement it. On 13 August 1984 the following news was published in newspapers:

“New Delhi, Aug 12 (PTI)— The Punjab analysts have come to the conclusion that the aid that Pakistan gave to the terrorists was aimed at making Punjab a separate country by breaking it up from India. This scheme was prepared by the secret service of Pakistan, not a few years ago but about two decades back. The main idea was to sow discord among Sikhs and Hindus. Punjab is on the border and is also prosperous. It was surmised that if disturbances were caused in Punjab, it would itself break off from the country.”

The top political authorities of Pakistan gave approval to this plan. It was suggested that the help should be given secretly. But the help should be so effective that a Sikh State, ‘Khalistan’, should come into existence of its own.

In the first phase, those Urdu papers of Britain were activated which follow Pakistan's dictates. These started carrying baseless and provocative reports that Sikh rights were being crushed in India. The Muslim papers started pleading the cause of the Sikhs. The purpose behind it was to make the Sikhs think that Muslims were their greatest friends and sympathisers.

When not many Sikhs fell into this trap, the help was sought of a public relations agency of London. The agency gave the following suggestions:

1. Improvement in conditions at the Sikh pilgrim centres like Nankana Sahib, Dera Baba Nanak Sahib etc.
2. To arrange for visits of Sikhs to these shrines on occasions like Guru Nanak birthday and Baisakhi and provide them concessional air tickets
3. To provide special facilities for reading and recitation from Guru Granth Sahib
4. To freely provide visas to Sikhs settled in other countries to visit Pakistan on these occasions
5. To prepare special cassettes of Gurbani and ‘Shabad Kirtan’ which should be sold at Nankana Sahib and also abroad.

Pakistan immediately started implementing these suggestions because these were going to have a far-reaching effect, psychologically. Sikhs settled abroad, specially those unhappy over something, were cultivated as they could be made use of.

Pakistani agents started telling them that they were very nice people but injustice was being done to them. These agents were given unlimited funds so that they could provide all kinds of entertainment and luxuries to the Sikhs. They were repeatedly called to the Pakistani mission in London and were asked their opinion, thus making them feel important. Petty officers and big diplomats asked them to give suggestions to improve the gurdwaras in Pakistan.

Pakistani businessmen and journalists settled in Britain played a big role in extending this public relations exercise. One man who played a leading role in this was called Buta Beg or Buta Khan. He started a campaign for Sikh-Muslim brotherhood. He developed great friendship with Khalistan supporters like Giani Bakshish Singh and Gurcharan Singh. Gurcharan Singh later became a leader of the extremist Dal Khalsa. These leaders did not have many supporters, still Buta Khan encouraged them to hold a demonstration before the Indian High Commission.

Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan came in contact with these people in 1971. They tried to get help from the Chinese embassy but the Pakistani sources succeeded in persuading them to keep off the Chinese mission.

The Pakistani embassies in America and Canada soon joined the activities initiated by their mission in Britain. This became obvious when Dr Chauhan gave statements that America had started sending arms to the Sikhs via Pakistan. Dr Chauhan even stated that Pakistani military officials had reached Guru Ramdas Sarai in the garb of Sikhs.

Even before the military action in Amritsar, Dr Chauhan revealed that a transmitter had been installed in Pakistan for radio broadcasts. Radio Khalistan broadcasts would soon start from there.

If we study closely the statements of Dr Chauhan, they seem to tally with those of Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq and Defence Minister Ali Ahmed Talpur. While General Zia went on repeating that he would not like to take any action which could sour relations with India, his own Defence Minister was allowed to say that Pakistan had full sympathy with the Sikhs who were being crushed.

After the military action the troops recovered several documents and other equipment proving direct Pakistani link. A powerful transmitter was recovered from the Golden Temple tank with the help of which the terrorists used to establish direct contact with Lahore. Shabeg Singh had a similar transmitter in his hand at the time of his death.

In one room of Guru Ramdas Sarai, passports of Khalistan and Pakistan were recovered and also found were a number of fake

beards. Post mortem of many of the extremists revealed that many of them were not Sikhs and were circumcised. In the words of Lt-Gen Sunderji, they were Pakistani Muslims in the garb of *Nihangs*.

Pakistan used to send arms to the extremists through many ways. The latest American arms meant for Afghan rebels used to find their way into Punjab. Gen Zia has also admitted smuggling of these arms. On 28 Dec. 1983 an extremist named Pappu said after his arrest that with the help of two *Nihangs* he had smuggled 600 revolvers from Ganganagar to Amritsar. The arms were usually hidden below the bags of grain in the trucks meant for Golden Temple *langar*. Police would not inspect these trucks. The police was also in league with the extremists. In room no 179 of Guru Ramdas Sarai there were nine fully armed Pakistani agents who had come to help the extremists.

The documents found in the Golden Temple also reveal that large amounts of funds were being sent to the extremists via the foreign branches of Habib Bank of Pakistan. Bhindranwale's nephew Jasbir Singh used to collect funds from Pakistani businessmen in UAR and send these to India. The help of some notorious smugglers was also taken in sending money and arms.

Jagjit Singh Chauhan and Ganga Singh Dhillon had direct access to Pakistan President General Zia and they often used to visit him to discuss the plot to dismember India by proclaiming an independent Khalistan.

Pakistan has had sympathies with the extremist Sikhs right from the beginning. On 11 May 1983 some Pakistani youths led by Anwar Ahmed Khan took the pledge at the Golden Temple to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Khalistan. The Jamaat-e-Islami in Jammu and Kashmir also openly supported the demand for Khalistan. At the Anandpur Sahib conference the Imam of Jama Masjid delivered a provocative speech accusing the Government of India of doing injustice to the Sikhs and Muslims of India.

Some Sikh pilgrims from India were taken aside for secret parleys with military officials of Pakistan. One extremist revealed that when he had gone on a visit to Pakistan, Gen Zia had clearly said, "We want that the Sikhs should also form their own state and stay in it with respect". Some Pakistani officials had also given him encouragement. He said he had brought some letters for Bhindranwale from Pakistan.

### **43,000 Troops Ready**

The scheme to turn the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras into armed fortresses was prepared in 1979 and by 1980 these started

turning into centres for extremists and arsenals. By 1983, over 30,000 youths had been trained in use of arms, in sabotage, murders and in spreading terrorism. By January, 1984 this figure had reached 43,000. Many retired armymen had been inducted. They were paid generously. Bhindranwale used to get hit lists prepared with the help of Shabeg Singh and would get anybody speaking against him murdered. About 200 persons were killed inside the Golden Temple itself and their bodies were thrown away.

In Kasur area near Lahore, fake Nihangs and Indian Sikhs were trained at a training camp. Pakistan prepared an army of fake Sikhs whose aim was to enter Punjab and spread hatred between Hindus and Sikhs and incite them to fight. In Kashmir also such camps were set up with the help of pro-Pakistan elements. People trained in these camps last year threw severed heads of cows in Hindu temples and cigarettes in gurdwaras in order to rouse the two communities against each other. Some Pakistanis were even caught throwing tobacco inside gurdwaras.

To implement this scheme of open rebellion against the Central Government and to pile up arms and ammunition, Bhindranwale squandered between 1980 to 1984 about Rs 20 crore through his supporters and the Sikh Students Federation. This included money from bank dacoities and loot. If Akali Dal chief Harchand Singh Longowal and SGPC Chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra choose to speak out, then many mysteries will be cleared. They have full knowledge of whatever was going on inside and around Golden Temple in 1979.

How closely was Pakistan involved is revealed by the schemes that were ready to incite the villagers around and the Sikhs in the Army as soon as the Army entered the Golden Temple. Even video films were ready for this purpose. From some of the arrested mutineers it was discovered that they had been misled by some fake Sikhs sent to cantonments as trainees.

After the Golden Temple operation and wiping out of the extremists the Pakistani newspapers laboured for the cause of the extremists. They called Bhindranwale the reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh and published baseless stories about the Indian Army. After the death of Bhindranwale they sent letters purported to be written by him from abroad.

A retired military officer, resident of Ferozepur, told this writer in a conversation:

"Our village is seven to eight kms from the Pakistani border. At the time of Partition the Pakistani villagers ran away from their border homes from fear. But they returned with the beginning of

the Khalistan movement. Dilapidated houses were properly repaired and were turned into centres of smuggling. Indian visitors were very warmly welcomed in these villages. They were given free food and accomodation. We have ourselves sent many youths from our land to Pakistan. Now instead of asking them to look for jobs in India we send our youths straight to Pakistan. We tell them plainly that we don't have to live in the land of Indira Gandhi who has insulted the Sikhs. Go and get training in Pakistan and don't come back with small weapons but come with tanks. Now there is no alternative but to have our Khalistan. Or we would leave India and settle in Pakistan where we are treated with so much respect."

It is not necessary to point out the trap the above conversation indicates. Include the proposed proclamation for Khalistan for 11 June and the scenario of the plot becomes clear. It can be understood in this context alone how our Army jawans have saved the nation from such a great danger.

In his Press conference Home Secretary M.M.K. Wali had admitted that some groups of terrorists had gone to Pakistan via the Poonch area in Jammu and Kashmir and he had clear proof of this.

## **America and CIA**

The Soviet Union has openly charged that CIA was fully involved in making Golden Temple a centre of extremists. Soviet President Cherenkov, replying to a letter from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, fully supported military action to tackle the situation in Punjab and said, "the dream of some powers to create an independent Khalistan would not succeed and Punjab would continue to remain an undivisible part of India." This was the first official statement of the Soviet Government. Soviet Minister Lev Rownin said at a function at the Indian embassy in Moscow that with the help of CIA and the American Government some powers wanted to create instability in India. These powers wanted to divide India.

A former director of CIA has made a surprising revelation. He says that the chief actors in the Khalistan drama, Ganga Singh Dhillon and Jagjit Singh Chauhan are in the regular payroll of the CIA and their names are entered in the income and expenditure register of the organisation. These two leaders had given the assurance to American Senators and Government officials that the free Sikh State would always oppose the Soviet Union and Communism. It would always be on the side of America and would promote free enterprise. In return

for this assurance, the American officials allowed these two separatist Sikhs to meet American capitalists and mingle in the prosperous American society. Chauhan is believed to be on the payroll of the British secret service also.

There is no dearth of anti-Soviet maniacs in America, it is because of these maniacs that Chauhan and Dhillon are known today. Everybody knows that Chauhan is no farm expert, but Senator HESS James, despite objections of the State Department, called him to America to address a State committee on agriculture. Chauhan never addressed this committee but on this pretext he obtained a passport to visit America.

Here is another instance of American encouragement: A world Sikh conference was held in New York in which a resolution in support of Khalistan was passed. Including children, old men and women, about 2,500 people attended. Former Senator James Carnem addressed this conference. The president of this organisation is the rich owner of fruit farms, Didar Singh Bains, and the general secretary is Jaswant Singh Bhuller. Bains lives in California. He had told Bhuller that he would match the amount he collects from other sources for the organisation. The 61-year old retired Major General Bhuller collected about Rs 2 crore. The same amount was given by Bains. A large amount from this fund was to be spent on terrorist activity so that new Bhindranwales and Shabeg Singhs could be prepared.

In this conference the Soviet Union and the KGB (Soviet secret service) were roundly condemned for the military action in Golden Temple. It was said that whatever Indira Gandhi did, it was at the instance of Russia and that is why the Sikhs had been alienated from India.

This Sikh organisation is different from Dhillon's Nankana Foundation and Chauhan's National Council of Khalistan. Chauhan had set up the National Council of Khalistan on 12 April 1980 and three months later he had proclaimed the formation of Khalistan with himself as its president. His general secretary Balbir Singh Sandhu made a similar announcement sitting in Guru Nanak Niwas. On 26 January he burnt the national flag near the Harmandir Sahib and put up the Khalistan flag. On the Republic Day in 1982, Chauhan put up the Khalistan flag before the Indian High Commission in London, burnt the national flag and a copy of the Constitution and sent the ashes to President Zail Singh in Delhi.

Similar mischief was played in Los Angeles by Sikh extremists during the Olympic Games. They raised slogans against India and

Indian players and in support of Khalistan. They kept teasing the Indian hockey players with the result that the Indian team could not even reach the semi-finals. These extremists also burnt the national flag thus exposing to the world their treason. These extremists were joined in their demonstrations by the Kashmir Liberation Front and Pakistanis.

On 15 August, on the occasion of Independence Day, a function was organised in New York in which decorated boats were taken out carrying Indian citizens wearing dresses of different States of India. The extremist Sikhs tried to burn or to harm 20 such boats but because of the alertness of the American police and strong warnings given earlier, their plans misfired.

### **Chauhan and Dhillon**

The Indian Government had cancelled the passport of Chauhan in April 1981 itself. But he never returned the passport and with the help of his political friends continued to live in Britain and also toured Canada, America and some European countries to win supporters. Chauhan had Khalistan passports, postage stamps and currency printed in Canada and sent these all over the world. A Khalistan passport was sold for Rs 20,000. Taking advantage of the laws of Canada and West Germany, he sent some Sikhs there in the name of political refugees. They used to say they had been turned out of India because of their support for Khalistan. When Canada found that Khalistan was just an excuse for illegal entry, it stopped allowing such people. West Germany has also got wise to their ways. Charged with murder and other offences, Talwinder Singh had escaped from India but had been arrested by Interpol and jailed in West Germany. India demanded his repatriation but ignoring these appeals West Germany sent him to Canada.

Chauhan entered politics in India as a volunteer of the student wing of the Communist Party. He was a Minister in the coalition Akali Cabinet. When in 1971 the Bangladesh issue came to the fore, he took up the cause of kindling love for the Pakistanis among the Sikhs. Chauhan soon became a regular figure on Pakistan TV. He was shown holding the keys of Nankana Sahib to give the impression that Pakistan was handing over control of the holy pilgrimage centre to a Sikh.

In September 1971, at a Press conference in London, Chauhan raised the slogan of Khalistan. A month later, on 13 October, he gave an advertisement in New York Times listing the reasons why an

independent and sovereign Khalistan was necessary. Pakistan built up Chauhan at a time when the people of East Pakistan had been demanding Bangladesh. Bangladesh was formed on 16 December 1971. Ever since Chauhan has been playing some or the other drama to sell Khalistan in Britain, Canada and America.

Chauhan had claimed that he had obtained full support of America for the Khalistan movement and he would form the independent state within four years. He asked America to stop giving wheat to India. Some of his statements have been published in the White Paper. In London he said that the time had come to form a force of 10,000 guerillas to fight the Indian Army. He also said that Pakistani jawans had reached Guru Ramdas Sarai in the garb of Sikhs and were now awaiting orders from Bhindranwale. In 1983 he tried to enter India through Nepal and Bangladesh.

Another leader of Chauhan's ilk is Ganga Singh Dhillon who has formed a Nankana Foundation in Washington. Nankana Sahib is in Pakistan. It is in the place called Talwandi where Guru Nanak was born. Sikhs have occasionally demanded making a small autonomous city State of it on the lines of the Pope's Vatican City. But because it is linked with Pakistan, there is no mention of it in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Dhillon can keep visiting Pakistan on the pretext of Nankana Foundation. Some people go so far as to describe Dhillon as a relative of General Zia. The Indian Government knew all about him but it was its generosity that in March 1981 he was allowed to come to Chandigarh to preside over an education conference. In his address Dhillon declared the Sikhs were a separate nation and they should get observer associate membership of United Nations just like the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The conference had been called by the organisation called Chief Khalsa Dewan which was not an extremist organisation on the face of it but was an unabashed supporter of the British before Independence. Dhillon's slogan—'Sikhs are a separate nation'—was now taken up by the Dal Khalsa, SGPC and others and there was great controversy after the conference. Dhillon has not visited India again.

There is a rumour that a day before the Army action, Chauhan, Dhillon and a Pakistani General (Akram Khan) had come to Amritsar via Jammu and Kashmir. They met Bhindranwale and discussed with him the last phase of Khalistan formation. There is no way to confirm this report. But it strengthens the plot theory by which a formal announcement of the formation of Khalistan was to be made on 11 June.

## Britain and China too

Like Pakistan and America, Britain has also soiled its hands touting for Khalistan. It was Britain which had filled Sikh minds with separatism from Hinduism and even today the Sikh ego is centred on the fact that they had served the British so much. They do not tire of relating how they had served the British from the Mutiny till the first World War and also during the second World War in 1940. It was on the basis of this great service that during the NAM conference, they submitted a polite memorandum to British Queen Elizabeth to get them Khalistan as the Indian government was not listening to them. What patriotism was this! The correct answer to this question will be provided by the souls of martyr Bhagat Singh and others who smilingly embraced the gallows in order to free the country from the clutches of the British.

The Khalistanis helped the Kashmir Liberation Front in London whose members murdered senior Indian High Commission official Mr. Mhatre, they aided Maqbool Bhatt in his escape and organised sabotage of the Indian High Commission in London after the Army action in Amritsar. The British Government cooperated by watching all this silently, by its indifference and the inaction of its police. Some Afghan groups had also joined a demonstration outside the Soviet embassy in protest against their alleged involvement in "crushing" the Sikhs. One Afghan rebel leader had gone to New York from London and he spoke at the World Sikh Conference against the Army action in Punjab. A senior representative of the Tamil Liberation Front also participated in the New York conference. This shows how separatist groups are backing Khalistan and they are all centred in London.

All limits of propriety were exceeded when BBC invited Jagjit Singh Chauhan to make an anti-India speech on television and he took advantage of the opportunity to call for the assassination of Indira Gandhi. It is no secret that Chauhan had offered £ 75,000 for anybody killing Indira Gandhi.

Not only Indira and Rajiv but Bhindranwale's hit-list contained the names of even Charan Singh, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Jagjiwan Ram and also many other BJP and Arya Samaj leaders. They had all received threats of murder. About 1000 policemen had been detailed in Delhi to protect those who had received such threatening letters. About 200 policemen and many more plainclothesmen were stationed outside the residence of Indira Gandhi.

A conspiracy to smuggle arms for these murders and killings has

also come to light. A retired Brigadier, Jagir Singh, was caught at Palam airport on 20 July with three foreign made revolvers and 450 cartridges. Jagir Singh was close to Shabeg Singh. Shabeg had assured Jagir Singh that he would be given a special position in the proposed Khalistani Army. Jagir confessed that a big conspiracy had been hatched in Punjab after the Army action to murder big leaders. In the secret talks, besides Jagir Singh, the others who took part were Gopal Singh Gill, Lacchman Singh Sirothia and Sukhjit Singh. Jagir Singh collected lot of money in America and came to India with some arms. The rest of the arms were to come through Pakistan. Jagir Singh had earlier also played a major role in supplying arms to the extremists. He was in close touch with some other retired Army officers who had sympathies with the extremists.

The attempt to create instability in India did not start with Assam and Punjab. Immediately after independence, British and Pakistani agents had incited Naga leader Phizo to demand independent Nagaland. When China started training Naga and Mizo rebels in guerilla warfare, then this agitation got new life. The training was being provided in the Chittagong area of East Pakistan. This was one of the major reasons for Indian help in the creation of Bangladesh.

When the Naxalite movement started in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Bengal then Mao's China gave up all its hesitation and openly gave moral and physical support to these movements.

When Sikkim's former Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal married an American woman Hope Cooke, then the American agents lost no time in persuding him that he could turn Sikkim into the 'Switzerland of the East'. America and China were both equally interested in this conspiracy.

When the Naxalites could not succeed in Kerala, Bengal and Andhra and their dreams remained unfulfilled in Arunachal, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland also, then they made Punjab a centre of their activities. It is difficult to say how many of Bhindranwale's terrorists were Naxalites. But from the incidents of bank decoities, sabotage of rail lines and bridges, the burning of railway stations and cutting of canalways, it seems there were quite a few. The mystery of Chinese arms found at the Golden Temple can also be cleared by the surmise that these must have been brought by the Naxalites who had direct contact with China.

### **Foreign-based Movement**

Chauhan, Dhillon, Bains and Bhuller are just four names, but in

Britain alone dozens of separatist organisation and scores of leaders of this kind are prospering. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, the Afghan refugee groups and many other such expatriate organisations have come to the aid of Khalistanis. European countries, the American government and its secret services are aiding the Khalistanis with their own purpose in mind. Pakistan also derives great pleasure in slandering the secular and democratic character of India.

A majority of the Sikhs who have gone and settled in Britain, Canada and America are well-to-do people. They have worked hard and amassed a great deal of wealth. Some families have been there for generations. There is hardly a family in Punjab which doesn't have at least one member settled abroad. Some of the villages have nearly emptied, with a few farmers remaining. Canada has started an air service to help the Sikhs once visit their country of origin, from where their forefathers had left for Canada.

Atma Prakash Vikal wrote in 'Jansatta' about this. He says:

"These people are less Sikhs or Indians and more westerners. Their westernization has taken place at such a pace that today their customs, attitudes and way of life are entirely different from that of the Sikhs of Punjab. Even their religiousness is western-oriented. Most of these people do not even keep their hair like the Sikhs do. These people have everything, but they are people alienated from their land and don't have roots even in the western countries. Despite their frantic efforts, they cannot fully take on western colours. In the western society they do not have a place of honour, nor do they have any say in the political system there. Like Trishanku they are hanging midway. It is these people who strongly desire Khalistan or a Sikh homeland. Although, they would never leave the technology and comforts of the West to come back and settle in Punjab.

These Sikhs are homesick for Punjab. There is an urge in them to get back to their land. They want a country for which they should not be an expatriate minority but kings, even if they never return to it. Obviously they have little in common with the Sikhs of Punjab on the social, financial or political level. The Sikh of Punjab might not be rich like them but he is not alienated from his land. He has a stake in the political, social and economic system of the country. Whether through the Akali Dal or through the Congress, he fulfills his political participation. Therefore, the cry of Sikh homeland comes basically from abroad. After the Army action those who have raised slogans of Khalistan are either the followers of Bhindranwale or are venting their spleen.

These people have no doubt that they would always get help from Sikhs living abroad."

This analysis proves that the Khalistan movement is based not in the country but abroad. Its supporters in India are those whose loyalty to the country has always been in doubt and its supporters abroad are those who are alienated from their land. As for Pakistan, Britain, Canada, America and China; they have no concern for the interests of the Sikhs. Their aim is only to create instability in India. And for this end they would support not only Khalistan but any such movement or people interested in the break up of India. Their aims are only political.

The question is, how would any government deal with such an international conspiracy? Would it worship such conspirators, present them Ashoka Chakra for fearlessness in the merciless killings? If so that government would not survive but would be replaced by these conspirators. No capable government can permit this.

Those who consider this an election gimmick of Indira Gandhi should ponder if there had been somebody else as Prime Minister, would he have taken any different steps? If this kind of international conspiracy had taken place in the times of Nehru, Patel, Shastri, Morarji Desai or Charan Singh, would they have not resorted to Army action?

It is easy to be wise after the event. Khuswant Singh in his BBC appearance had described Bhindranwale as a madman. Soon the name of Sardar Sahib also appeared on Bhindranwale's hit list. With great swiftness he returned the 'Padma Bhushan' to prove oneness with his community. In defence of his action he says that the government could have laid siege to the Golden Temple, cut off the water and power connection, could have starved them and compelled them to come out and attack, but it should not have entered the Golden Temple for Army action. This was a very wrong thing to do.

Such childishness can only provoke laughter. About 10,000 bags of wheat had already been stored in the Golden Temple, so the question of starvation did not arise. Would the extremists inside die of thirst if the water connection was cut off? Then of what use was the entire sarovar and the hand pumps? Could they not make use of a generator if the power was cut off? Laying of siege? For how many months? Would not the lakhs of Sikh villagers have rendered it useless?

Therefore, one has to accept that there was no alternative but to take army action. That is why Indira Gandhi wrote in reply to a letter from a Canadian journalist.

"The first thing is why did they collect arms in the Golden

Temple? And secondly why did they take shelter in the Golden Temple? Was it not because they thought they could not be caught there and that they could easily take advantage of the religious feelings of the ordinary Sikh people? Should they have been allowed to continue killing Sikhs and Hindus inside the Golden Temple? When the attention of responsible Sikh bodies was drawn to this armed activity, did they take any action? How did the latest foreign-made and imported weapons reach Golden Temple where usually before entry one had to deposit one's watch, umbrella and any other belonging? If the practice of crime and terrorism had stopped in the Golden Temple, then where was the need for Army action? Is a crime less vicious and less reprehensible because it has been committed inside a gurdwara, mosque or a temple?"

And in the end she wrote,

"I have some responsibilities, some duties towards the nation and the Sikh society. I have fulfilled that responsibility and that duty."

Should we say murdabad to Indira Gandhi for having fulfilled her responsibility? No. Never.

We are reminded of Khushwant Singh's saying: "This was like destroying the house to kill the rats."

No, Sardar Sahib. Even when a small ant enters the trunk of an elephant, it proves a killer. And here we were faced with an international conspiracy which wanted to gobble up this entire country. Let us accept that the ones you are calling rats are in fact rats. But these rats were nibbling the foundation of the house. To protect the house, it was necessary to wipe them out. The house was not destroyed but saved from destruction. What would you call the guard who saved the house? *Murdabad or zindabad?*



JUNE, 1984.

The long night of death of 5-6 June was over. Neither the President nor the Prime Minister could sleep these two nights. Both had their own reasons. The Prime Minister spent the entire 48 hours of these two days in her South Block office.

Information had reached them that the action was over. But a new kind of activity had begun. Rashtrapati Bhawan had been flooded with telegrams and letters. A separate office had been deputed to go through them.

Here is a sampling of the telegrams:

"Never have there been greater atrocities on the Sikhs. Like Massa Ranghad and Zakaria Khan you will also be rewarded. We are prepared to face excesses at the hands of the meanest of Sikhs like you. We shall send martyr groups (*jathas*) from abroad to maintain the honour of the '*Azad Panth*'. Now you cannot keep the Sikhs under your yoke. We declare ourselves a free and sovereign community."

— Babbar Khalsa, Toronto.

"What glorious name you have—Lala Jail Chand!"

— Dharam Kaur Khalsa, Baltimore.

"This is the limit of violence. Shame on your being a Sikh. Resign if you have even a little conscience."

— Sikhs of Georgia, Metroatlanta, America.

"Stop the killing of Sikhs, or resign."

— Sikh Cultural Society of Metropolitan Windsor, UK

"The Sikhs of Hawaii demand your resignation."

— Sikh Association of Hawaii.

There was no dearth of telegrams which asked the President not to resign:

"In this hour of crisis the prayers of my *sangat* are with you.

Please remain in your post. The Sikhs need you as President at this time. May the Guru help you tackle this crisis also."

— Satjiwan Singh, Khalsa Sikh Dharma, UK.

"May the Guru's blessings remain on this earth. Please make use of the power of prayer. Use your position to establish peace. Please do not resign."

— Shati Parwa Kaur Khalsa, Angels.

"Everything is done by the Lord. Please do not resign."

— Dukh Niwaran Kaur Khalsa, Apton.

The above telegrams had come from abroad. Similar telegrams were being received from the different States of India. There were other pressures also on the President. Famous journalist Khushwant Singh had returned his Padma Bhushan. Patiala prince Amrinder Singh had resigned from Parliament as well as from the Congress-I. Another MP Devinder Singh Garcha had resigned his Lok Sabha seat. Many Sikh officers in different towns expressed their resentment in different ways. The workers of Punjab Sindh Bank in Delhi removed the pictures of Giani Zail Singh and tore them up. On the walls of the bank they put up banners proclaiming, 'The Bank of Khalistan'.

Meanwhile, reports came of Sikh *jawans* leaving their cantonments and marching towards Amritsar. Reports of similar marches came from Ramgarh in Bihar, Ganganagar in Rajasthan, Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh and some centres in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The runaway *jawans* from Pune even tried to seize control of the international airport in Bombay. Pakistan's radio and TV and the BBC were regularly broadcasting provocative news. Pakistan radio was saying that the Golden Temple had been destroyed, Sikhs were being massacred and Sikh women raped. It was natural for the *jawans* to be provoked by this. In some cantonments, Pakistani agents were working as trainees. Excited *jawans* in Ramgarh had murdered Brigadier Puri and seized from him the keys of the armoury. Procuring weapons they had escaped in Army vehicles. Some of them had reached Bareilly and Etawa. But giving another example of their vigilance, the Indian troops foiled these little mutinous attempts also.

Even those who did not support Bhindranwale, forgot the murders committed inside the Temple, and due to their injured self-respect, were asking why did the Army enter the Golden Temple when Home Minister P.C. Sethi had declared many times in Parliament that it wouldn't do so.

The Chief *Granthi* of Nanded expelled a faithful Sikh like the President and four others from the Sikh *Panth*.

All this created a turmoil in the political life of Zail Singh the kind of

which he had never faced before. Other Presidents had also faced their hour of ordeal. There was the issue of the powers of the President and the Prime Minister before Dr Rajendra Prasad, the Chinese and Pakistani aggression (1962 and 1965) before Dr Radhakrishnan. Mr V.V. Giri had spent most of his life in the labour unions. How did he feel when in 1974 he had to sign an ordinance against the workers during the railway strike? Or Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed when he had to sign the proclamation imposing emergency? And Sanjiva Reddy during the unprecedented constitutional crisis in 1979? But the dilemma of these former Presidents was nothing compared to the situation Giani Zail Singh was now facing.

Early in the morning of 8 June a famous political commentator received a phone call from the Prime Minister's residence to immediately proceed to Amritsar to broadcast an eyewitness commentary on the Golden Temple from AIR. He could not even inform his family and soon reached Amritsar. The Chief Granthi on seeing him said "I would give you a separate interview on how Bhindranwale extorted from us Akal Takht gold valued at Rs 4 crore."

### President in Golden Temple

The commentator suddenly saw that a procession of the President was coming towards the Golden Temple. There had been no prior information about the President's visit. The President was eager to view the condition of Golden Temple with his own eyes. He had insisted on being informed every moment of the activities during the Army operation. Now he took the earliest opportunity to reach the Golden Temple.

Soon after reaching the Golden Temple his secretary Tarlochan Singh—said to be a sympathiser of the Akalis—disappeared. During the walk round the Parikramā he was not with the President. Perhaps he was on a secret inquiry mission of his own. Stray firing still continued from the side of the extremists. One commando walking along with the President received a bullet which crashed on his bullet proof jacket and fell off. There was a wane smile on the face of the President.

The president was happy to see that Harmandir Sahib was safe. But on seeing the damage to Akal Takht he could not hold back his tears. For over 20 minutes he stood like a statue. The tears did not stop.

Before accepting the 'prasad' the President touched the stairs with his hands and rinsed his mouth with holy Sarovar water. At that time

only the Chief Granthi was with him. Sahib Singh said, "Sir, the Army brought in not one but nine tanks. It completely destroyed the Akal Takht". The President did not utter any word but seeing him in tears, Sahib Singh found great relief. Later, when the news commentator reminded him of the interview, Sahib Singh said "everything is over now. What is the use of giving the interview?".

The commentator was surprised at this volte face. The suspicious activities of Secretary Tarlochan Singh later led to his suspension. But at the insistence of the President he was reinstated.

After this the resentful President withdrew into a room. He stopped meeting anybody. He refused to answer the phone even. He cancelled all his public engagements. Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi went and met him separately. There were talks of long duration but his anger or his distress did not subside.

The entire nation was stunned at the silence of the President after his return from the Golden Temple. Everybody was eager to know the truth from his lips. But he was silent.

Meanwhile all kinds of rumours started. The President will soon resign. If not today, then tomorrow. All Sikhs in the Army will revolt. It was as if the pulse of the nation had stopped. Because of this development, Congress-I stalwarts who had been counting the Operation Bluestar gains from the election point of view, stopped in their tracks. Was the entire move going to recoil?

.. Suddenly on June 8 the Prime Minister went to Abu. Where was the need for the overworked Prime Minister to visit Abu? On the face of it she was to address a police rally. But actually she had gone there to talk to Longowal and Tohra. It had been planned to bring the two to Abu. Then it was found that they had first been taken to Simla—HQ of Western Command—for questioning. The Prime Minister also decided to go to Simla. But meanwhile the newspapers found out about this and one of them published a report to this effect. The Prime Minister's advisors thought that such a visit at that time might provoke the Sikhs. Longowal and Tohra had lost the trust of the Sikhs because of their surrender. The Prime Minister cancelled her Simla visit. As there was no need then to take Longowal and Tohra to Abu, they were sent to Udaipur and Jodhpur instead.

The Prime Minister left for Ladakh on 9 June.

This visit of hers was absolutely unexpected. There was little speculation in the country about it. Even the newspapers did not pay much attention to it. The purpose of this visit became clear only later.

## Why the Ladakh Visit?

Three months before the Amritsar operation, there had been regular firing from the Pakistan side in the Jammu Kashmir border area of Naushera from 5 to 24 February. The Indian Army gave a fitting reply. Just before the Amritsar Operation, there was some trouble in this area. That it was no ordinary incident was proved by the fact that Army Chief General Vaidya visited the area.

Just when the Army operation was on in the Golden Temple, Pakistani troops occupied the Nubra Valley in Ladakh. Before this, a big concentration of Pakistani troops was seen between Kargil and Sipchit glacier. The border villages had been vacated and the Pakistani troops took control. Baluchi troops had been stationed near the Khunjreb pass in the Sipchit glacier area. The purpose being that at the right opportunity, they would infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir and work as guerillas. Pakistan occupied the 19,000 ft high Nubra Valley in order to create such an opportunity and to test the alertness of the Indian troops. They had thought perhaps nobody would take notice of this act of aggression at such a height.

The Chinese troops were already there at Aksai Chin. With the opening of the 12-month Karakoram Road, a direct link had been established between Pakistan and China. Perhaps the plan was that as the Indian troops would enter the Golden Temple, the Pakistani and Chinese troops would create a little nuisance to fulfill their word given to the extremists. This information had even been publicised by the Khalistan information centre in West Germany.

But the Indian troops were not sleeping. Immediately after the seizure of the Nubra Valley, Indian operations began from this side and at the same time, paratroopers were dropped behind the Pakistani lines. Thus the Pakistani soldiers were caught between two attacks and they had no option but to vacate the Nubra Valley. This action was done so quickly that even the Kashmir Government came to know of it only after its completion.

In such a situation it was but proper for the Prime Minister to go to Ladakh and boost the morale of our troops.

But there was another purpose behind this visit.

Incited by Pakistan after the troops' entry into the Golden Temple, many Sikhs escaped from their cantonments. A total of about 2,000 Sikh soldiers had run away from different places in India. There was a big section of Sikhs in the troops stationed in Ladakh. If these Sikhs

also had revolted, then Pakistan and China would have found a golden opportunity of creating mischief. It was necessary to assure these Sikhs that the action in the Golden Temple was not against Sikhs but against a few extremists who were bent upon breaking up the country at the instigation of foreign countries. The Prime Minister had tears in her eyes when addressing the jawans she said, "I am not only the Prime Minister of the country but a mother also. I know what it is to lose a son. With the death of every person in Punjab my heart used to bleed and I felt as if another Sanjay of mine had been snatched away." These words should have worked as a balm on the hearts of the Sikhs.

### **The Tashkent Trip**

There was another—the third—reason for the Prime Minister's Ladakh visit and it was the most significant.

Bhindranwale was to announce formation of Khalistan on June 11 but he was perhaps not aware that the Army would shatter his dreams so soon. It was June 3, the day the troops surrounded the Golden Temple. This was the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun Dev. About 1200 men and women had reached the Golden Temple to pay respects to the martyr. Bhindranwale had guessed that the Army was ready to act but he had estimated it might take the Army about a week to complete the mission. By that time they would have informed the ordinary village people and thousands of Sikhs would gather here. Any earlier action, he thought, they had the wherewithal to withstand. And then on hearing of the Army action the people would themselves gather and revolt. With thousands of people storming the place, the Army would be able to do nothing and as planned they would announce the formation of Khalistan before everybody on June 11.

But the first thing the Army did was to impose a curfew, and kept extending it till the operation was over. And then there was the ban on newspapers, on journalists, on trains, on vehicles and on any kind of transport. Entire Punjab was sealed off and the operation took place after completely locking up the patient in the operation room.

The Army's estimate also proved wrong. It had calculated that at the most the operation would be over in two hours. It had never imagined that the extremists would be prepared like the Army of an enemy country and that they would possess machine guns of 12-mile range and anti-tank weapons. That is why it took them 36 hours instead of two hours.

By June 7 morning Bhindranwale's game was over, but June 11

was still to come. If during this time, China and Pakistan did some mischief, then?

There is a saying that time is bald from the back. If you must catch him, it can be done only through the front. Indira Gandhi had to fully nullify the plans for June 11. Therefore the Ladakh trip was just a pretext. Actually the Prime Minister was to go to Tashkent to discuss with Soviet leaders how to foil the mischief if started by China and Pakistan. Tashkent is hardly an hour's flight from Ladakh's capital Leh. On the night of June 10, the Prime Minister was not in Leh. She went to Tashkent at night and was back before daybreak. On 11 June she was in Delhi so as to be ready to respond if there were some provocation.

If the Government chooses not to clarify it, it becomes difficult to confirm certain facts. But there is circumstantial evidence to prove that the Prime Minister had visited Tashkent on the night of June 10. On June 9 the prime Minister had talks with CPI leader C. Rajeshwara Rao. On the basis of these talks the Indian ambassador in Moscow, Mr Nurul Hasan secured a special meeting with President Cherenkov in spite of it being a Sunday, day of closure of all official work in the Soviet Union. It is also known that President Cherenkov had gone to Tashkent on June 10.

June 11 came and went. There was no announcement of Khalistan formation, nor was there any activity from the side of China or Pakistan.

### **First Ray of Dawn**

The purpose of expressing the above in detail is that although the night of death was over on June 7, dawn had not come.

After returning from the Golden Temple on June 8, a sullen President confined himself to a room. One wrong word from him could open the floodgates of destruction for the country. The entire nation was waiting with bated breath for him to break his silence. The country had somehow overcome the mishap of emergency, but if the President had said even once that he was not in agreement with the action in Amritsar, it could never have emerged from that crisis.

Meanwhile people with selfish motives were busy spreading all kinds of rumours, and from her side the Prime Minister was preparing to meet any contingency. Some persons went to the extent of saying that Bhindranwale was a creation of Giani ji and if there had been no action in the Golden Temple earlier, the reason again was Giani ji. The blame for the failure of talks with the Akalis was also placed at his

door. Excavating past history, some people started saying that as Chief Minister in 1972 Giani ji had himself started separatism by activating Guru Nanak University, by connecting 400 major gurdwaras with the 400 km long Rajpath christning a dozen hospitals after Sikh saints.

In fact the President had to contend not with anybody else but to his own mind. The struggle was between his devotion to his religion and his duty as President. If we accept democracy as the best system, then we have to face the jealousies, the malice, deceit and other consequent problems also. At last, when the moment of reckoning came, the President took the right decision. Duty triumphed over emotions. It took him almost a week to resolve the mental struggle. Finally he acted not like a small politician but as a historical statesman. He was the first Sikh to have decorated the highest seat in the country. The people had expressed confidence in him. If the Prime Minister made all efforts to see him elevated from Home Minister to the position of President, it was perhaps her foresight which could clearly see the impending crisis in Punjab. The presence of a Sikh on the highest seat of the country bore fruit on June 17, when in his capacity as the first citizen of the country he broke his silence and addressed the nation.

The President referred on that night to the sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur. The Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces told the people that it was in that tradition that our troops gave up their lives by not firing a single shot at Harmandir Sahib even when facing the rain of machinegun bullets from that side. His words acted like balm on the injured hearts. The President also made it clear that if the extremists had responded to repeated appeals and had surrendered, then no damage would have occurred to the Golden Temple and unnecessary bloodshed would have been avoided. Those describing radio and TV as Government media and were devoted to Pakistan radio and the BBC, could also not think away the President's speech. Navbharat Times editor Rajendra Mathur said;

"Bent upon madness, if the Sikh extremists were like the poison eating the Indian democracy, then Giani Zail Singh's composure and sobriety was like nectar, which despite the superficial weakness, is still present in India. This month we have discovered an even bigger source of 'Amrit' than Amritsar, and by hailing Giani Zail Singh we are in fact applauding the Amritsar within each one of us."

After the night of death, this was the first ray of dawn. But morning was still far away.

After the death of a close relative, one loses interest in worldly things, a kind of detachment develops. The same thing happened with the Akalis. The false egos they had developed since the time of the British turned into anger and indifference towards the nation after the Bluestar Operation. There is a saying that enmity ends with death. Even those Sikhs who were not supporters of Bhindranwale, now due to their hurt self-respect, became his admirers. They started calling him an incarnation of God, a copy of Guru Gobind Singh and a martyr. They started preparing to observe martyrs day in the Golden Temple and to send martyrs 'jathas' to free Golden Temple from the control of the Army.

### **Sant and Martyr**

Should Bhindranwale be accepted as a Sant or a martyr? Over 99 per cent people of India will never call him Sant, nor put him in the category of martyrs. Only those who have a different mentality would continue to call him the greatest Sant and martyr. There is no question of argument here but that of emotions gone astray. So far we have been calling those people martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for the sake of the nation or to protect their religion. Bhindranwale had none of these aims. He was fighting only for an imaginary Khalistan. How does one explain this mentality? The man who turned the Golden Temple into an arsenal, a refuge of killers and looters, a storehouse of intoxicants, a whorehouse and centre of all kinds of illegal activities is venerated as a Sant! And the brave jawans of the Army who gave their lives to protect the sanctity of the Golden Temple, did their duty by saving the nation from being broken up, were considered to have defiled the Golden Temple by entering it! Propriety demanded that the entire nation should have observed a Thanks Day in the memory of the brave soldiers, or observed a day of penitence for having allowed the extremists to cross all limits. But when the entire mentality has grown corrupt, there is no shame in calling nectar poison and poison nectar.

The extremists who were killed in the Army action were certainly on a wrong path, but ultimately they were sons of this soil and hence it is natural for Indians to feel sad over their deaths. The pain and injury to these youngmen's parents, brothers and sisters and other relatives can be understood. But only they can glorify the extremists who do not consider anti-national activity a sin. Merely dying or to die fighting till the last moment does not turn one into a martyr. Many a dacoit do not surrender but die fighting till the last moment. And many of these

dacoits are worshippers of Kali or Durga. But because of this they cannot be called martyrs. There are different standards for a Sant or a martyr. To call those martyrs who do not measure up to these standards is a crime in itself.

Mohammad Bin Qasim who attacked Sindh's emperor Dahar, might be called a martyr by his own countrymen, but what would you call those in India who consider him a martyr? Mahmood Gaznavi attacked and looted the Temple of Somnath. He ignored the entreaties of the priests; "take away as much money as you like but please spare the idols" with the argument that as a Muslim it was his religion to break idols. Such a 'religious man' could be termed a 'hero' by the residents of Ghazni and Afghanistan but no citizen of India could call him a hero. It is a question of national values. Those who sing the praises of Nadirshah, Halaku or Changez Khan must be residents of those countries, and not Indians. Bhindranwale is also called Sant or martyr by only those people who feel no compunction in burning the Indian Constitution and the national flag. The nameless sadhus of 'Anandmath' who picked up arms to free the country from the yoke of a foreign power, would be called saints, martyrs and heroes; but not those who, in order to harm the country's unity, had donned the garbs of Sants but inside were harbouring the devil of hatred. Many Englishmen who had committed atrocities on Indians and were arraigned before the British Parliament, were ultimately pardoned on the ground that whatever they did was in the interest of their country. They can be heroes for Britain, but for the Indian public they would continue to be enemies. As for the Sikhs, who honoured the killer of Jallianwala Bagh, General Dyer with a Siropa and welcomed the demolisher of Sikh empire Lord Dalhousie by illuminating the Golden Temple; where is the wonder if they worship the enemy of the nation, Bhindranwale! Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah may be Father of Nation in Pakistan but what he is for Indians only an Indian can tell you.

One should give no credence to the argument that Bhindranwale met this fate because he was working to protect Sikh religion. If tomorrow some Bal Thackeray enscones himself in the revered Tirupati Temple and starts training terrorists and hoarding arms, would not the Indian Army enter the Temple and finish off the challenge? Or if some Imam Abdullah Bukhari does in the Jama Masjid all that Bhindranwale did in the Golden Temple, should not the Indian Army act there?

The Khalistanis have great faith in General Zia-ul-Haq who has been waging a religious struggle for the last eight years to turn Pakistan into a true Islamic democracy. But rest assured, if a

Khomeini-like religious fanatic entrenches himself in Lahore's Jama Masjid, collects arms and prepares an army of a lakh mujahids and starts a "religious war", then Zia would never be in a dilemma like Indira Gandhi. He would not flinch from crushing it in the name of Islamic democracy.

Let us take the case of Kaba which holds the same honour in the hearts of Muslims as Golden Temple for Sikhs. When in 1979, Khomeini-inspired Shia terrorists occupied Kaba, the commando troops of Saudi Arabia fought these terrorists and freed Kaba.

It is necessary to give the examples of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia because some new religious historians like Khushwant Singh never tire of saying that Sikh traditions are not non-violent and tolerant like the Hindus but are closer to Islam. Arms have been worshipped in gurdwaras therefore it is not wrong to collect arms in gurdwaras. Weapons worship is a part of Vijaydashmi (Dussehra) festival of the Hindus also, but because of this the temples are not turned into arsenals. Whatever may have happened in the gurdwaras, it was the Sikhs' internal affair. Therefore if to take action against them the police or the Army enters the Temple, it is the aggressor and those who died fighting them are martyrs. But has anybody heard the terrorists of Kaba being called martyrs?

### Hurdles in Kar Seva

After the Army action the Army could very well have accomplished the task of removing the *malba* and repairing the damaged Akal Takht. But keeping the sensitive feelings of the Sikhs in mind, it was decided that the Sikhs themselves should take up this task. Just as worship is believed to free man from his sins, in the same way Kar Seva (voluntary labour with hands) is for the Sikhs an act of redemption, a part of worship. That is why even VIP Sikhs consider themselves blessed by participating in Kar Seva. But when the Sikhs, instead of coming forward for Kar Sewa, started sending martyr groups (*Shahidi Jathas*) led by women volunteers in order to oppose Army presence in the Golden Temple, the hopes of dawn turned into even thicker darkness.

Baba Kharak Singh, veteran of many Kar Sevas and famous in this field, was prepared for Kar Seva. He said he was old and could not walk and requested that a straight road be constructed upto the Darbar Sahib so that he could take his car up to that place. The Government accepted his plea and got prepared a straight road by demolishing the buildings in the way. Then the Akalis themselves

stopped his car from proceeding and prevented him from doing Kar Seva. He himself said that Kar Seva was nothing new for the Golden Temple. It had always been on in some way or the other. Thereafter Baba Harbans Singh and Baba Mangal Singh were persuaded to do Kar Seva, but the Akalis stopped them also. The Akalis and the SGPC arrived at an agreement with the Generals on this issue but later went back on their word. The agreement had been arrived at with the help of some Opposition parties, but later it was made out that the Government had rejected the agreement.

In fact all the five *granthis* were victims of Akali politics. And they continue to be such victims. They wanted withdrawal of the Army from the Golden Temple but were not prepared to give the guarantee that the extremists would not be allowed to occupy the Golden Temple again. Also, they did not want the Akal Takht to be repaired. They wanted to keep it a ruin as a monument to Bhindranwale so that the sentiments of ordinary Sikhs could be exploited. Then Baba Santa Singh of Buddha Dal was called from Bhatinda. He came willingly alongwith hundreds of his followers.

He came and started Kar Seva. Many Hindus and Sikhs from other States joined his followers in Kar Seva. In a matter of few days they had cleared the entire *malba*.

When the priests found their game defeated, they issued an edict (*Hukamnama*) declaring Baba Santa Singh an apostate (*Tankhaiyaa*) and expelling him from the *Panth*. But Baba Santa Singh had the support of his followers and the ordinary public. He replied that the *granthis* did not declare an edict against Bhindranwale from Akal Takht and in fact surrendered the seat of Akal Takht to Bhindranwale. Now that the same Akal Takht was not in existence what was the point of an edict from there? He did not present himself before the *granthis* nor did he ask their forgiveness. Instead he said those calling him *tankhaiyaa* (apostate) were themselves '*Tankhaiyaa*' (employed on wages). Therefore there is no weight in their words except that of Akali politics. The same *granthis* expelled President Zail Singh, Central Minister Buta Singh and Delhi Congress Sikh leader Mahendra Singh Saathi also from the *Panth*.

## **Sarbat Khalsa**

Now it was the turn of Sarbat Khalsa. This conference was called after 179 years and that also against the wishes of the Akalis and the *granthis*. This was the first occasion when, after challenging the power of the chief *granthis* inside the Golden Temple, Baba Santa Singh was

now challenging them publicly. The Akalis termed the Kar Seva of Baba Santa Singh as 'Sarkar Seva' and the Sarbat Khalsa a 'sarkari' conference. If the Akalis can play politics by collecting people in the name of religion, then why can't other people do this? Which Guru has said or is it written in Guru Granth Sahib that a Sikh is the one who is a member of Akali Dal? Those joining the Congress, the Communist parties or the Lok Dal, will they cease to be Sikhs? The Akalis and Sikhs are not synonymous. It is true that to free gurdwaras from corrupt *Mahants*, the Akalis had made great sacrifices, but for the freedom of the nation the Congress has made no fewer sacrifices. Still we do not consider the country a trust of the Congress. Religion is also as important as the nation. If one party can exploit it to run its politics, so can another party.

Sarbat Khalsa may have had the support of the Government and backing of the Congress party, but the way lakhs of people collected for the conference it became evident that the Akali Party only made great noise. There was a very big section of Sikhs who were not its supporters. The way the Bhindranwale-brand extremists dealt with the *Nirankaris*, there is no doubt that they would have acted similarly against *Nirmales*, *Udasis*, *Satnamis* and *Namdhari* communities. They are all Sikhs but the Akalis hated them. Never before had such a large number of Akali-opponents had come together. The Akalis are dominated by Jat Sikhs. It is obvious that the non-Jat Sikhs, the Khatri and Arora Sikhs living in towns, or the *Majhabi* (Harijan) Sikhs living in villages are tired of Akali politics. They do not co-operate with them. That is why the Akalis had never been able to win such a majority in the elections as to form a government of their own. They could enjoy the fruits of power only when they joined hands with the Congress, Janata Party or the Jan Sangh. This power alone has turned their heads. But like victims of night blindness, the Akalis have never understood the truth about their little potential.

With the participation of Nanded and Patna Sahib chief priests in the Sarbat Khalsa, the Akalis found their position further weakened. By taking the permission for Kar Seva from this Sarbat Khalsa, Santa Singh exposed the '*Tankhaiyaa*' (paid employees) stalwarts of SGPC. Santa Singh openly declared in this massive congregation that the SGPC and the Akali Dal wanted to maintain Akal Takht as a ruined monument to Bhindranwale but "I do not want this to happen in the holy Harmandir Sahib. That is why I have come here for Kar Seva." Challenging the power of the *granthis* he said they did not have the support of the ordinary Sikhs.

This conference not only gave its support to Kar Seva but also

cleared some political issues on which the Government wanted to act. One was such an amendment in the Gurdwara Act that the gurdwaras could not be used again for political purposes. The second was that the Akalis may not be allowed to take sole possession of religious powers. How far will the Government be successful in this only the future can tell, but a beginning was made there to break the monopoly of the Akalis.

This was the second ray of dawn.

The success of the Sarbat Khalsa upset the Akalis. They started looking abroad again and announced a World Sikh conference on 2 September, 1984. There was no doubt that only Khalistan-supporter Sikhs would have attended this conference. But how could the people and the Government of India allow it to take place on the soil of India. The Government announced a ban on it. But the five priests and the Akalis were bent upon calling this conference.

Ultimately the conference was held on the appointed date. In spite of the ban on vehicles and hurdles on roads, about 60,000 people took part. Most of the participants had travelled on foot. It was promised there would be no political reference in the conference but the chief priest could not avoid politics. He could not stop the slogans of 'Khalistan Zindabad'. Chief *Granthi* Kirpal Singh, with the other chief priest Sahib Singh standing by his side, read out a resolution and without any debate in its favour or against it, declared it passed. Helpless in containing the commotion, he declared the conference closed midway. The resolution had given an ultimatum to the government that if by 30 September, the Army was not withdrawn from the Golden Temple, then on October 1 *jathas* would march to the Golden Temple. Declaring President Zail Singh and Central Minister Buta Singh *Tankhaiyaa* (apostate), their social boycott was recommended. There is another charge against the President that he went into the Golden Temple with an umbrella. The five priests told newsmen that the *morcha* could be put off on three conditions: withdrawal of the Army, stopping of Kar Seva and handing over of the gurdwaras to the SGPC.

But the Government decided not to submit to this ultimatum. Home Minister Narsimha Rao said the Government was ready for talks to solve the Punjab problem but for this the Akalis would have to take responsibility for the following four conditions:

1. Clear condemnation of separatism
2. no misuse of gurdwaras for political purposes
3. no collection of arms in gurdwaras and no shelter to criminals
4. condemnation of sabotage, arson, violence and terrorism.

The Akalis or the five *granthis* were not prepared to give any such undertaking.

This means that the forces of darkness will not easily permit a new dawn. Special efforts would have to be made to bring about that new dawn. It is necessary to discuss what these new steps should be.

### **Language States: A Wrong Decision**

On 17 August 1963 C. Rajagopalachari had sounded a warning to the nation:

"The multilingual provinces of the old regime were developing synthesis, each within its own wide boundaries, of more than one language community tending towards an all-India synthesis. The unfortunate linguistic reorganisation of States on a single-language basis stopped this process of synthesis. The States have hardened into rigidly isolated units developing a language nationalism with a proprietary ego and an aggressive attitude towards one another. All-India unity is badly affected by this. The binding factor is the Central Government, namely the image of the illustrious emancipators from foreign rule, which is thinning and is bound to vanish and leave India in a state of disintegration. State nationalism replacing all-India nationalism. Increased power for the Centre is not a remedy, as some people believe. It will not help to build but only serve to provoke rebellion. This will be so because the Centre will always be identified as the stronger State or group. This is a gloomy picture, though distant."

This prophecy of Rajaji has fulfilled itself in Punjab via Tamil Nadu and Telegu Desham. The force that in the early years of post-independence India kept the country together was not so much Central, or even the charisma of Jawaharlal Nehru, but "the image of the illustrious emancipators from foreign rule." With the fading of that image, the increased power sought by the Centre only aroused 'rebellion'. Therefore, as a solution to the Punjab problem, it is necessary that we reconsider the issue of linguistic States.

If linguistic States had not been formed, then there would never have arisen a demand for Punjabi Suba or Khalistan and the Anandpur Sahib resolution would have remained a scrap of paper.

Now it is too late and it might not be possible to reverse the process of linguistic States, but for the sake of national unity it is necessary that even as regional languages are given prominence in the States, at the same time national language Hindi should not be

neglected on any level. It should be given the same status as available to Russian in the Soviet Union. The Hindus of Punjab insist on Hindi because they consider it a vehicle of nationalism and they do not want to turn away from the national mainstream. But the Sikhs, imitating the Muslims, do not bother about the national mainstream.

The Akalis consider the rivers of Punjab as their ancestral property and would concede a little water to other States only as a favour. In the same way, the Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Kannadigas and Tamils talk of Narmada, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri as if their water is their birthright. Similarly the Maharashtrians think they have a right on Bombay when in its development there was the hand of many generations which were non-Marathi speaking. If we did not have linguistic States, then no one-language speaking person would lay claim on cities like Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Chandigarh. All the rivers, all mountains and all natural wealth is the property of entire India and not one province. This is the meaning of one nation.

### **Anandpur Sahib Resolution**

As long as the Anandpur Sahib resolution is in existence, the anti-India feeling among Sikhs will not go nor would they aim for the unity of India. Three versions of this resolution are given in the White Paper itself. These versions have been changing so many times that no understanding person can imagine what the Akalis want! No doubt the word 'Khalistan' does not figure in the resolution, but a separate theocratic State is very much referred to in it. Generally, only some harmless demands have been discussed in newspapers and that is why some liberal politicians have been in favour of accepting these demands. Mrs Gandhi had herself announced acceptance of the religious demands but the Akalis have had little interest in the religious demands. Although publicly they have been referring to only the religious demands, but actually they do not take them seriously. Their demands have been so senseless that an ordinary Sikh intellectual would see through them at the first glance. Let us have a look at some of these demands:

1. No part of water and electricity from Beas, Ravi and Their Dam should be given to Haryana. All of it should be kept with Punjab.
2. The Bhakra Dam's mixed administration should end and it should be administered only by Punjab.
3. There should be a nationwide ban on the RSS.
4. There should be a ban on the Nirankari Mission.

5. There should be at least three Sikh Ministers, three Deputy Ministers and three ministers of State at the Centre.
6. Either the Home Minister or the Defence Minister should be a Sikh.
7. In case of disciplinary action against Sikh officers in the administration or police, two of the three judges should be Sikhs.
8. Punjabi should be given the second language status in Haryana.
9. In all the three wings of the armed forces, the chief or the deputy chief should be a Sikh.
10. There should be five Sikh Governors, five Sikh Lt Governors and five Sikh High Commissioners.
11. Five Sikhs should be ambassadors and the Indian envoy to Pakistan should always be a Sikh.
12. The Centre's medium of communication with Punjab should be Punjabi.
13. Whatever taxes are recovered in Punjab by the Centre should be under the control of Punjab but Central assistance should continue as before.
14. The Akali Dal should be permitted to become a member of the United Nations.

### **Guerilla War**

It is possible that given time the Akalis would themselves understand the futility of terrorism or the Government crushes it with its efforts. After all, it was wiped out in Bengal, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Telengana. Therefore it won't be able to succeed in Punjab also. The terrorists who have escaped during the Army action or have gone underground or spread out into other States, can become active again and resort to guerilla warfare. They may continue to get foreign help in arms and money. Geographically, the plain of Punjab is not conducive to guerilla war. Breaking canalways, looting banks, ambushing policemen and Army men and snatching arms from them, burning railway stations, sabotaging rail lines, blowing up bridges and pulling out and killing innocent passengers in buses—all these activities should be considered a part of guerilla warfare. But it is not possible that, given a competent Government in India, the terrorists would succeed in these guerilla tactics. The example of Malayasia is also before us. The Indian Army also is now experienced in tackling this kind of activity. Even at a big cost the government would not allow these people to succeed.

## **Special Rights of Minorities**

If India is to continue as a nation, it will have to dissolve the Minorities Commission and stop any move for special rights to the minorities. Being a minority is no blessing, nor being a majority a curse. But this is what is happening in India. No other country in the world provides the number of facilities to minorities that India provides. There should be no injustice or atrocity against minorities, but this does not mean that there should be injustice against the majority. The way the minorities demand facilities in proportion to their percentage, if the majority also starts asking for such facilities, then there would be nothing left for the minorities. We have faced many unfortunate results of appeasing the minorities. A Human Rights Commission should replace the Minorities Commission.

## **Common Civil Code**

We wish to draw attention to some basic issues which are acting as hurdles to the nation's development and national unity even 38 years after independence. Those who call India a group of nations and a sub-continent instead of a nation find its diversity significant, but they don't see any significance in its unity. Why are they unable to see the similarities? They forget that even while protecting the qualities and specialities of different groups, the Indian society has cast them in a common cultural mould. History and Geography have fully co-operated in this. Its unity is not merely hundred years old or a gift of the British. It is because of this misconception that a majority of the educated people are unable to be one with society and are becoming instruments of breaking up of society.

The Indian Constitution has given the same rights to all citizens. But if we make the 'Hindu Code Bill' and approve the Muslim Personal Law, then this thread of unity gets divided and the principle of secularism is harmed. By making separate personal laws for Muslims and Christians, we cannot apply the Indian Penal Code to them. Imitating them the Sikhs have also opposed Section 25 of the Constitution and demanded a separate Sikh Personal Law for themselves. Then why should not the Jains, Buddhists and other sections raise such demands? Even an organisation like the Arya Samaj has also tried to ask for special rights by proving itself a minority, specially in the field of education.

Any Hindu Government official can be punished on marrying more than one wife, but he can escape punishment by becoming a

Muslim. What a strange spectacle would it be if a Muslim judge with two wives were to pronounce sentence on a Hindu for having married a second time. Therefore, there should be a common code for all Indians. We should have an Indian Code Bill instead of a Hindu Code Bill.

### Section 370

By nature man aspires to reach the status of people who are richer, more comfortable and powerful than him. One owning hundreds wants to own thousands and the one with lakhs wants to be a millionaire. As long as such a wish is not fulfilled, one remains dissatisfied. Sikkim wants to be Bhutan, Bhutan wants to be Nepal, Nepal wants to be Bangla Desh and Bangla Desh wants to be Pakistan. Nobody wants to look below him. The special status given to Jammu and Kashmir through Section 370 also creates jealousy in Sikhs. When Kashmir has fully acceded to India then there is no meaning of special status. As long as this position remains in Kashmir, how can the Sikhs' demand for a separate constitution, separate flag and separate head of state be stopped! For the sake of national unity, therefore, Section 370 of the Constitution should be scrapped forthwith. The surprising thing is that when the issue of removing this section arose in the Kashmir Assembly at the time of Sheikh Abdullah, the Congress itself opposed it. Their aim was appeasing the Muslims of Kashmir valley and not national unity. This Section has been responsible for disturbances and other separatist activities in Kashmir.

According to information with us, alongwith the declaration of Khalistan on June 11, there was a conspiracy to make Kashmir an independent Islamic country and to include Jammu in Khalistan. The then Chief Minister of Kashmir, Dr Farooq Abdullah, was a party to this conspiracy. He had prepared the ground for this in meetings with Bhindranwale. That is why he had given permission for camps in Kashmir to train extremists. He did not put a ban on the Sikh Students Federation even after the Central Government's advice. This organisation was already banned in Punjab. At the time of Army action in Golden Temple, the pro-Pakistan elements in Kashmir and extremist Akalis together resorted to violent acts. They burnt the Arya Samaj temple in Hazoori Bagh and also the Devaki Kanya Pathshala and caused damage to many religious places of Hindus. According to secret information, to help in the toppling on 11 June, 3000 Pakistani soldiers had entered via Azad Kashmir and were hiding in various gurdwaras of Kashmir in the garb of Sikhs. This conspiracy cost Farooq Abdullah his Chief Ministership.

## Separate Identity

The Sikhs are victims of both an inferiority complex and a superiority complex. The inferiority is because of the general liberality of the Hindus and the superiority because of the 'Raj Karega Khalsa' mentality. Just as love and hatred are two sides of the same coin, in the same way, from the psychological point of view, the origin of both these feelings is the same. The inferiority feeling generates fear and the superiority brings about pride. These feelings may be imaginary, but they do affect life. *Khalsa Panth* was born to fight certain Muslim rulers. But there are no Muslim rulers now, and the *Khalsas* are in a fix—What to do now to prove and maintain their identity? To establish a separate identity before independence they held the hand of the British. But when the British also departed, the country got partitioned, the problem again emerged before them. The partition had sent them back in the lap of those very affectionate Hindus against whom they had been struggling to keep a separate identity. They have blood relations with Hindus. Blood is thicker than water. The Sikhs want to separate themselves from Hindus but are unable to do it because of blood relations and this only increases their mental disquiet.

The Hindus don't do anything on their own to harm the Sikhs. But what can one do about imaginary fear and pride? If Sikhs want to be differentiated, then they have to do something or the other to prove their speciality. All Sikhs are Hindus because they are 'shishyas' (pupils) of the Gurus. 'Shishya' in Punjabi is known as Sikh, 'Shiksha' (education) is known as Sikhya. (The Gurus themselves were not Sikhs, because they were Gurus, and not pupils). But all Hindus are not Sikhs. All long-haired *Khalsas* are Sikhs but all Sikhs are not long-haired *Khalsa*. Here is another example: All *Brahmins* are *Hindus*, but all *Hindus* are not *Brahmins*; all *Saraswats* or *Gaurs* are *Brahmins* but all *Brahmins* are not *Gaurs* or *Saraswats*.

If the Sikhs abandon the five Ks like the hair, comb, sword etc., then they would cease to be different from Hindus. Therefore, to keep a separate identity, it was necessary to emphasize the five Ks. Khushwant Singh says:

"There are three phases of the Sikhs' merger into Hindu society—In the first phase the long haired has his hair trimmed or takes to smoking. In the second phase he has his beard shaved off and becomes a normal-haired Sikh. In the third he is lost in the ocean of Hinduism."

Even after winning Punjabi Suba, the achieving of majority, freedom of movement in the entire State, prosperity in industry and trade, the fear in their minds is not reduced nor is the feeling of superiority fulfilled. The complaint of injustice and partiality from them continues. They seem to aspire for such a Sikh State where only the long-haired Sikhs would be treated as citizens of first order, and in every Government work, at every level, only the *Khalsa* customs and behaviour would be followed. Only that would satisfy them. That is why the Anandpur Sahib resolution has emphasised teaching of Sikhism in schools and colleges, respect for Sikh priests and giving of one-tenth income as donation. They want the government to take up the entire responsibility for maintaining their special identity. Gurdwaras, Secretariats, *Jathedars*, Collectors, priests principals, Chief Minister etc. should all be branches of one tree. And the *Khalsa's* birthright to rule must be granted to him. The Constitution should also be moulded to this end. In this context Navbharat Times editor Rajendra Mathur asks: "Is Sikh religion so weak that without the big oxygen tent of a religious State it cannot remain alive? Can India ever grant such a tent to the Sikhs?"

Have the Sikhs ever thought that this separate identity can boomerang on them? Sometime back Dr Mahip Singh had complained at a public meeting in great anger that when extremist Sikhs were banned from entering Delhi, on the occasion of Asiad, Lt General Jagjit Singh Aurora (retd) of Bangladesh-liberation fame, was also stopped. The audience had cried 'shame, shame' at this. But we think this was not an insult to the General. He got this treatment because of his separate identity. It was not written on the forehead of Gen Aurora that he was so and so. It is not expected of an ordinary policeman that he should recognise a famous General. Therefore, as a soldier, instead of objecting to this incident, Gen Aurora should congratulate the policeman that he was doing his duty with such alertness.

There is another danger of this separate identity. When two Indian Airlines planes were hijacked, the hijackers were people with a separate identity. When extremists were arrested all over Punjab, it was due to their separate identity. The fear is lest all over India, or all over the world, the separate identity people would be looked at with suspicion and if any crime takes place, innocent Sikhs arrested only because of their separate identity. In such a case the fault will lie not with the protectors of law and order, but with the separate identity of the Sikhs.

## Not Hindu?

The essence of Guru Nanak's teaching is that service of man is the true religion. He attacked idol worship, vanity, hypocrisy and empty traditions thus signifying his progressive views. But opposing idol-worship, the Sikhs have ended up treating Guru Granth Sahib as holy. They consider Guru Granth Sahib the body of the Gurus and worship it the same way as the Hindus worship Rama or Krishna or other gods and goddesses in temples. Like the Hindu idols, every morning the holy book is taken from Akal Takht to Harmandir Sahib to the accompaniment of devotional songs and recitation and in the evening again it is taken back in similar fashion to Akal Takht to allow it to "sleep". To carry it there is a palanquin covered with silk cloth and decorated with golden frame. Like idols it is fanned with a flapper and, like idols again, it is given the first partaking of parshad (*Bhog*). It is clad in woollens in winters and cool light clothes in summers. The devotees sit before it and ask for wish-fulfilment. They make promises to it of making offerings on wish fulfillment. Just as pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped in Hindu homes, in the same way pictures of Sikh gurus printed on calendars are worshipped. *Akhand Path* (recitation without break) has become a custom. At the end of the *Path*, *bhog* takes place (offering of food to the book). Just as Hindu businessmen hire a *Pandit* to come and read the Ramayana at their homes, in the same way the prosperous Sikhs hire a *granthi* to come and recite Guru Granth Sahib sitting in some corner of the house.

The Sikhs are in no way behind idol-worshipping Hindus in outward show. Any place where the Guru Granth Sahib is recited is considered holy. When somebody wants to illegally occupy some land, a recitation of Guru Granth Sahib is arranged. The Muslims construct a platform, place a piece of cloth on it and start worshipping it in the name of the grave of some holy man. The Hindus place an idol of Hanuman. This has taken place in many a colonies of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Just as Hindus decorate their idols with gold, silver and diamonds, the Sikhs also cover their gurdwara domes with gold. The dome of Delhi's Bangla Sahib gurdwara has 25 kg gold embedded in it. The Granth Sahib placed in Akal Takht has one and half kilogram gold in its cover. The Sikhs also take out floats like the Hindu floats of Rama and Krishna. During the Chief Ministership of Giani Zail Singh, there were many floats of Guru Gobind Singh taken out on the 640 km Guru Gobind Singh Marg. The 20-30 km long procession had gone

from Anandpur Sahib to Damdama Sahib. There were two horses in that procession called Amolak and Dilbagh claimed to belong to the clan of the tenth Guru's horses. When the procession reached Chandigarh, there was a stampede of devotees trying to touch these horses and to collect their dung. According to the 'Tribune', the horses were presented gold and silver bangles and two costly shawls. The people touched their foreheads with the dust of the ground that these floats passed.

There is a fresh evidence of blind faith. The news about a golden hawk seen at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib spread like wild fire. The crowds became unmanageable and piles of offerings were received. On inquiry it was found that the hawk had been hired from a Muslim who kept hawks. Its wings were cut off and it was so arranged that it would appear golden from a distance. It was fed opium and placed near Granth Sahib. It was declared the golden hawk of Guru Gobind Singh. Over Rs 92,000 was received in offerings from devotees. Of this half was given to the owner of the hawk and the other half was distributed between the *granthis* of the gurdwara.

There are only 974 couplets of Guru Nanak in Granth Sahib. Later the sayings of six of the other nine gurus were added to it. There are now 62 verses of Guru Angaddev in it, 907 of Guru Amardas, 679 of Guru Ramdas, 2218 of Guru Arjun Dev, 115 of Guru Teg Bahadur and only one shloka of Guru Gobind Singh.

Granth Sahib does not contain the sayings of Sikh Gurus alone. Contemporary saints like Namdev has 60 couplets in it. Ravidas has 41, Kabir 292, Dhanna 4, Jaidev 2 and one each of Ramanand, and Parmanand.

The aim of including the sayings of these saints in the Granth Sahib was to establish a strong base for Sikh religion on the Indian intellectual genius so that it could sustain itself in the holy land of India.

A comparative study of Vedas and Granth Sahib reveals that the spiritual depths Nanak had sought and discovered, were the same as already available in Vedas, Upanishads, Darshan Shastras, Gita and the mantras and shlokas of Shankaracharya.

In their urge for separate identity if the Sikhs want to deny this religious relationship with Hinduism, then it is upto them. As we said before the word 'Hindu' is indicative more of nation than religion. But just as Muslims living in India object to being called 'Hindus' (although they are called 'Hindi' or 'Hindu' in Arab countries) in the same way if the Sikhs object to being called Hindus, then we have no right to oppose it. If they do not want it, then nobody in the world can force them to be called Hindus. But in no case can they be given permission for anti-India activities.

# 17

## Nightingale Silenced

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It was a bolt from the blue. The Nightingale whose every breath lent fragrance to the garden had been bloodied and removed from the scene.

A similar unforeseen event took place 37 years ago. Then also the danger of it had lurked but there was no provision to prevent it. Then Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated.

This time there were three rings of guards and the security was so strict that even a bird could not flutter. But who could have known that the guards themselves would inflict a calamity that would stun the entire world.

It was the morning of the last day of October (1984).

Nine o'clock in the morning. The world's most popular leader, the ruler of the world's largest democracy and a very powerful Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi started from her residence 1 Safdarjung Road to her office on 1 Akbar Road.

It is a few minutes' walk from 1 Safdarjung Road to 1 Akbar Road. Blood red Bougainvillaea plants were in the way. A snake also hid in these shrubs. The passage was narrow hence personal bodyguard Dinesh Bhatt was walking a few feet behind. Somebody called out the name of Dinesh Bhatt. He turned round. By the time he could turn back, the on-duty guards Beant Singh and Satwant Singh had riddled Indira Gandhi's body with bullets.

Indira Gandhi's political aide, Makhanlal Fotedar quickly arranged a white Ambassador car and in the back seat sat a distraught Sonia Gandhi with the head of her mother-in-law in her lap. They sped towards All-India Institute of Medical Sciences.

The doctors operated upon her but found that the right lung had been completely smashed. There were 13 holes in the intestines and the blood vessels had been ruptured. Although the heart was intact, one of the lungs had become useless. The X-ray showed that the

spinal cord had been badly broken and the bones above the arms were smashed. Surgery was useless in this state.

When the doctors found that the eyes were not moving and the pulse also had not started, they accepted defeat and declared her dead at 2 p.m.

The BBC had announced Mrs Gandhi's death in its 12 noon bulletin. The news agencies also sent this message on teleprinters in the afternoon. The newspapers brought out special bulletins confirming her death.

The news spread like lightning in the Capital and a big crowd started collecting outside the Medical Institute. By evening the crowd swelled to such numbers that all the roads leading to AIIMS were blocked.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon Rajiv Gandhi arrived from Calcutta. Travelling in the lift, he asked, "What's the news?" The speechless aide hung his head. He understood. All was over.

About 50 yards away from the operation room, a meeting of the then Cabinet and the top Congress leaders took place. They discussed the situation and took a decision about the future Prime Minister. This was the reason why Indira Gandhi's death had not been officially announced. At about 5.30 p.m. in the evening, President Zail Singh reached the Medical Institute straight from the airport after cutting short his Yemen visit. Some people raised slogans against him and even stoned his car. The President remained at AIIMS for only 20 minutes. Soon after the official announcement of Indira Gandhi's death was broadcast at 6 p.m. on All India Radio, the President got Rajiv Gandhi sworn in as the new Prime Minister.

## **The Riots**

The big crowd outside the AIIMS at first could not believe the news of Indira Gandhi's death. Soon this disbelief turned into anger. The crowd started setting fire to taxis, scooters and buses. When the people heard that some Sikhs had celebrated the death of Indira Gandhi and even distributed sweets, then their wrath knew no bounds. This wave of anger travelled from the Capital to the entire country. From November 1 onwards, there were reports from many towns of looting of shops and houses of Sikhs, and even burning and killing them.

The riots took place mainly in North India. There was big loss of life and property. Whenever riots take place anywhere in the world, anti-social elements take full advantage. Had these riots been

communal only, then no Sikh would have escaped alive in North India. But this did not take place. What happened was that the Hindus provided protection to their neighbourer Sikhs even at the cost of their own lives. There could have been fierce reprisals in Punjab of these incidents. But this did not happen because of the underlying communal amity.

## **Ingratitude**

What did Indira Gandhi do for the Sikhs?

1. Soon after taking over as the Prime Minister, she agreed to the division of Punjab. It was converted into Haryana and Punjab. Earlier, there had been threats of fasts unto death and self-immolation on this issue. But Nehru had remained unmoved.
2. Indira Gandhi in her award gave Chandigarh to Punjab while the Shah Commission had recommended giving it to Haryana. The Chandigarh residents themselves are not in favour of its going to Punjab. Every member of Parliament from this area has been elected on favouring their demand.
3. Indira Gandhi made Giani Zail Singh President of India. The post had been decorated earlier by such eminent and internationally-known scholars like Dr Rajendra Prasad and Dr Radhakrishnan. Giani Zail Singh, on his own, could not even have dreamed of reaching that position. (Later his role in solving or complicating the problem of extremism in Punjab is known to all).
4. Indira Gandhi had made the unilateral announcement of accepting the religious demands of the Sikhs.
5. Indira Gandhi even accepted the demand of amendment in Section 25 of the Constitution—without even consulting Parliament. It is a different matter that the Sikhs themselves could not decide what amendment they desired in this section.

But see what the Sikhs did to Indira Gandhi!

Our scriptures have detailed ways for atoning all kinds of sins. But they prescribe no atonement for ingratitude. In fact there is no atonement for the sin of ingratitude.

## **Diseased Mentality**

About 15 days before the assassination of Indira Gandhi, an anonymous Gurmukhi pamphlet had been secretly distributed among Sikhs of the entire country. It shows what poisonous mentality was working to bring about the end of Indira Gandhi. The pamphlet said:

"On 3 June 1984, the martyrdom day of that great martyr Guru Arjun Dev, the she-devil Indira of the Zakaria-like Hindu society put the entire Punjab and Chandigarh under curfew and had the Army surrounding Harminder Sahib in Amritsar. During the Army action, in which the government used modern weapons, armoured vehicles and tanks, great damage was caused to the buildings of Guru Ramdas Langar, Guru Ramdas Sarai, Guru Nanak Niwas, and Samundari Hall and to even Harmindar Sahib. The symbol of royal power, Shri Akal Takht Sahib was demolished with cannons and tanks. During this Army action the Army dogs (who went inside with shoes on, and smoking and drinking) burnt the holy volumes of Guru Granth Sahib. Apart from this, the Sikh Reference Library, which contained the glories of Sikh history in the form of valuable books and volumes of the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib, were reduced to ashes. Old weapons kept as mementos of the tenth Guru, Shri Gobind Singh, were totally wrecked."

In this pamphlet, even if we ignore the abuses heaped on Indira Gandhi, some clear questions emerge:

1. Why was it found not necessary to mention what happened inside the Golden Temple before the Army action?
2. Why was not the responsibility fixed for the killings taking place outside the Golden Temple, throughout Punjab?
3. Was the sanctity of the Golden Temple maintained during the misdeeds of Bhindranwale?
4. Why was the Akal Takht, repaired at a cost of crores and rebuilt in even more glory than before, not accepted?

The pamphlet also said:

1. Why should we give recognition to the tyrannical government which has levelled to the ground the holy Akal Takht Sahib built by sixth Guru Shri Hargobind Sahib, Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas Ji?
2. For us the Akal Takht comes first and not the Delhi Takht.
3. For us the Constitution framed on the basis of lies and treachery has no meaning.
4. Isn't it insulting the house of Gurus to accept a Constitution which resolves to destroy the holy pilgrimage centres, as venerated as the Guru Granth Sahib?
5. Are the Sikhs of Punjab giving wheat, electricity and water to the Hindu nation in order to become targets for tanks? Shall we keep giving wheat, electricity and water to them? No *Khalsaji*, these are the property of the *Khalistani* nation.

These should not be allowed to go out.

6. Can we ever agree to live in that Hindu society which, after the Army attack on Harmandir Sahib, celebrated by distributing all kinds of sweets and liquor among the Armymen and the CRPF. Just think *Khalsaji*, these Hindu dogs make merry over the destruction of the Guru's house and still would be considered innocents!
7. Shall we continue to be the protectors of the country's borders even after the insult to the Guru's house and the martyrdom of thousands of innocent Sikhs? The answer to all these questions is establishment of Khalistan and nothing else. For a *Khalsa* and to every Sikh, the Guru's house comes first and the country and its Constitution only later. It is the duty of every Sikh, whether he is in Army, Air Force, Navy, Police, B.S.F., CRPF, Government service, private service, running a shop, business or is even a labourer to take revenge on this tyrannical government and to blow away its seat just as it blew away our Guru's blessed Akal Takht. Therefore, the Massa Ranghad kind of bitch and she-devil Indira and the contemptible traitor Zail, who has eaten the salt of the Guru's house, should be sent to their abode by becoming Sukkha Singh and Mehtab Singh. Every Hindu of this Hindu kingdom is guilty in the eyes of the Gurus. He should be sent into eternal sleep just as the toadies of this tyrannical government tied the hands of innocent Sikhs, Sikh women and children and gunned them down mercilessly. The Guru's order is: "Die for the sake of the one who is the Beloved."

The following questions emerge which every thinking person should ponder:

1. If Akal Takht is above the seat of Indian Government, then would the Sikhs agree to give similar status to Jama Masjid and the Temple of Tirupati?
2. If the Indian Constitution is based on lies and treachery then what is the logic in fighting elections on its basis?
3. After calling India a Hindu Kingdom, are the Sikhs, who call themselves non-Hindus, ready to accept second-class citizenship?
4. Is it in the interest of the Sikhs themselves to incite all the Sikhs to violence?
5. If the wheat, electricity and water of Punjab is the property of Punjab, does that mean the Sikhs have no right on anything produced in any other part of the country?

6. Those talking of revenge, do they have any concern for the Sikhs living in other parts of the country away from Punjab?
7. Is this the message of the spirituality and Gurbani of Guru Nanak?

The Sikhs themselves, and other countrymen also, will have to ponder over these questions with a cool mind because on the answers depends the future of the country—and also that of the Sikhs.

# 18 Thousand Fanged Terrorism

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**A**FTER the assassination of Indira Gandhi in revenge for the June 5, 1984 Army action, and the November riots in reaction, it was felt that the back of terrorism had been broken. In this belief, the Government of India released Akali leaders like Longowal, Badal, Tohra and Talwandi who had been arrested during the 'Blue-star Operation'. The Prime Minister himself participated in Hussainwala function on 23 March, 1985 the martyrdom Day of Bhagat Singh—and announced steps for early completion of the Thein Dam for irrigation, the setting up of a massive integral rail coach factory to provide employment to the people of Punjab and also 5 per cent bonus to the farmers on their crops.

The Akali big-four were however, as usual, caught in the race for leadership. Longowal, Tohra, Badal and Talwandi, all of them had to rehabilitate themselves among the Sikh masses. The extremists had been accusing these four of cowardice by surrendering to the Army and of betraying the *Panth* by not dying fighting like Bhindranwale. That is why all the four leaders went on making provocative speeches. It seemed from these speeches that they had learnt nothing from the preceding tragedy and there had been no change in their mentality.

Now Talwandi made his own clever move. He brought Bhindranwale's 83-year old father from Rode village and had him announce dissolution of all Akali groups and formation of a United Akali Dal. It was declared that for the sake of unity of the Dal, there was now no Longowal group, Talwandi group or Tohra group but an only Akali Dal whose leader was Baba Joginder Singh. Thus a simple villager, innocent of political intrigues, had a Khomeini-dom imposed on him. Baba Joginder Singh was quickly made to announce a 13-member working committee which included, apart from Tohra, Talwandi, Badal and Longowal some notorious extremists who were in Jail for various crimes.

This alarmed both Longowal and Tohra. They began to understand the new game. Both resigned; Tohra as SGPC chief and Longowal as leader of the Akali Dal. Their followers also were concerned. The two leaders felt this new Khomeini-shaped terrorism would gobble them up. By obeisance before extremism, their own existence would be endangered.

Before this, in order to obtain the support of the extremists, Tohra had demanded Rs 10 thousand million to demolish and rebuild the Akal Takht and various other buildings of the Golden Temple.

Meanwhile, Longowal came to Delhi. He met the people affected by the November riots and also the bereaved families. He was told that at most of the places the Hindus had risked their own lives to save those of their neighbouring Sikh brothers. His speeches thereafter in Delhi were not as bitter as at the time of his release. Official and even non-official circles welcomed this little change as a good omen. But the people with restive mentality did not find this agreeable.

### **The Tenth of May**

Then came the 10th day of May. The Mutiny of 1857 had begun on 10 May. The new mutiny of 1985 was a gift of the scientific progress in these 128 years. Transistor bombs planted in several places constituted this new rebellion. These were the plastic toys of the scientific age. Nice to look at, these turned into bombs when switched on.

At about 6 p.m. a child in Gandhi Nagar found a transistor lying on the road. He picked it up and took it home. How could he know that death lurked in it? The transistor exploded like a bomb when turned on. Three people died. At about 7-15 p.m. a UP Roadways bus for Ramnagar stood packed with passengers. As soon as the driver took his seat, a bomb exploded and seven people lay dead. At 7-45 a DTC bus was moving through Africa Avenue, New Delhi. Office workers were in a hurry to reach their homes when suddenly an explosion was heard. The first reaction was that perhaps the bus tyre had burst. When smoke started emanating from the bus, people realised it was murder. Those on the road started running to save the bus passengers. They could not however prevent one death and injuries to six.

Every five minutes between 6 and 7 p.m., about 50 buses leave Delhi's Inter-State Bus Terminus. It was Friday. The next day was a holiday being the second Saturday. There was therefore a big crowd of people going home for the weekend. Thousands were anxiously waiting to meet their children. The transistor bombs news spread like a storm and the buses were quickly removed from the spot. If there had

been a stampede, as perhaps the terrorists must have hoped, many would have died there itself.

Slowly reports started pouring in about transistor bomb blasts from North-South-East and West Delhi. The blasts took place in the colonies where there had been riots in November and also in the posh colonies of South Delhi, which had been untouched by riots. The terrorists must have closely studied the map of Delhi and spread the bombs out in all directions so that the police would keep running and its failure would terrorise the citizens.

These blasts cleared two facts. One that the back of terrorism had not been broken. As at the time before the 'Bluestar Operation', the initiative was in the hands of terrorists. Secondly, they wanted the people to desist from appreciating the constructive efforts of the Government and to wreck the chances that were developing for a dialogue between the Government and the Akali leaders. The Akali leaders' trustworthiness had been exposed with the induction of Joginder Singh as the new Khomeini on the stage. In this atmosphere of terrorism, nobody could even mention the possibility of talks.

This new phase of terrorism spread from Delhi to Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. There were explosions at 80 places and about 100 people died. The entire North India had come into the grip of this new terrorism.

### **Government Alertness**

But the Government was alert this time. Fire brigades were busy extinguishing fires and ambulances were speeding the injured to hospitals. Within six months of his taking over, the Prime Minister was facing his second big crisis. He called a meeting of high officials and Ministers and through wireless issued orders to all States not to let the situation go out of hand like the November riots. The Army was asked to stand by in Delhi. Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, who was in America for an eye operation, received a phone call to return immediately because the biggest danger of violent reprisals was in that State.

If the Government had not acted so promptly, perhaps the reaction might have been more violent and more widespread than the November riots. And nothing would have pleased the terrorists more. Within 48 hours the Government had brought the situation under control with the help of the police and the Army. This created confidence in the efficiency of the Government and communal riots did not even begin.

This phase of terrorism was significantly different from the one started four years ago. This time the terrorists showed little concern about who died. They just planted bombs in buses or trains. Terrorism should spread, no matter Hindus died or Sikhs.

From the time of Bhindranwale, the attempt in Punjab had been to make the Hindus and Sikhs fight. The plan was that the Hindus would flee from Punjab and the frightened Sikhs outside would run to Punjab. This way Khalistan would be formed automatically. The game was on again. If bombs explode in Delhi, then there would be November-like reprisals in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and when the anti-Sikh fire of this agitation is stoked by the political leaders, their plan would succeed. But due to the alertness and firmness of the Government, and the generally peace-loving and patient Hindu population, the expected fire did not take place. The terrorists then made the Hindu-majority areas in Punjab their target. Murdering some prominent Hindus in Khanna near Ludhiana, Dhariwal in the border district of Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur, they thought that now the Hindus would rise as one against this provocation. The Punjab villagers would reply to this Hindu reaction. Then their dream, which could not be fulfilled in the last four years, would be fulfilled.

At all the three places, the Hindus did react and Sikh shops and houses were damaged, but the Government showed alertness here also. The Saini community, the Balmikis and the students were worked up over the murder of Hoshiarpur Lok Dal chief and a prominent and influential Arya Samaj leader Chaudhari Balbir Singh. But curfew was imposed and the situation brought under control in a few days. The Hindus did not think of running away from these areas nor did the village Sikhs co-operate with the terrorists.

Provocative propaganda also continued during the period of bomb explosions. The 'Akali Patrika' of May 11 published a report that the Hindus had, in league with the customs authorities, imported thousands of German revolvers. These were being collected in temples to be made available at the right moment to the rioters.

### **The Pak Training**

The planned way in which the terrorists acted this time indicates that they were working under a central command and were getting full help from abroad. Security officials believe this was the mischief of those people who had run away at the time of the Bluestar Operation. The Punjab Police in a survey found out that about 6000 people were

missing from Punjab. A majority of them had escaped to Pakistan where they were being regularly trained. The smugglers, terrorists and spies were in league. Twenty smugglers were arrested on the Indo-Pak border on these days. Of these four were spies and six were connected with the terrorists. The arrested people confessed under sustained interrogation that they had been trained in Pakistan and sent back to kill Hindus under the threat that if they did not do so, then their families would be finished off. Similar confessions had been made by some smugglers arrested in Kashmir. Khushwant Singh informed the Government on May 8 that some Pakistani agents were active in India in the garb of Sikhs and they could become a serious danger to the country.

Pakistani officials have themselves admitted that there are 2000 Sikh refugees in Pakistan. Even otherwise, after Partition, about 4000 Sikh families had settled in Sindh. Selected Sikhs from among them were used as contacts with those coming from India. There were some Sikh women also who frequently travelled to Britain and Canada and had contacts with the extremists there. The terrorists from India were trained in the military cantonments of Rawalpindi and Chaklala and their trainer was none other than Gen. Niazi, who surrendered in Bangladesh and was eager to take revenge on India for that defeat. Another trainer was said to be Brigadier Imdad Hussain.

It is well known that Ganga Singh Dhillon and Pakistan President Gen. Zia are close friends. Their wives are from East Africa and are said to be relatives. Dhillon frequently visits Pakistan. Earlier he used to stay as a guest of Gen. Zia. This time when he went to Pakistan in March he stayed with Pakistan National Assembly member Shujaat Hussain. Shujaat Hussain is the son of Chaudhuri Zahur Ilahi. In 1960 Gen. Ayub Khan had entrusted Zahur Ilahi with the job of creating separatist feelings among the Sikhs. Dhillon's friendship with him dates from that time.

Some extremists were trained in West Bengal also under the guidance of the leftist Government of West Bengal. This was revealed after the arrest of five suspects who had their hair cut off. They said they had been trained, apart from Calcutta, in Burdwan, Midnapore and Hooghly also. A Sikh terrorist was arrested in Bangaon on Indo-Bangla border while trying to enter India with Rs 50 lakh. He could not give a satisfactory reply about the source of this money. West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu has certainly condemned terrorism, but because of political motives, West Bengal has become a shelter of Sikh terrorists.

## International Terrorism

There is a big underground training centre for extremists in Mexico also, for which a Sikh group of Delhi has sent Rs 6 crore. Recently a Delhi businessman, Amritpal Singh, was caught at Bombay's Santa Cruz airport with Rs 34.69 lakh. He revealed that after getting training in Mexico, the terrorists reach California. They remain in employment with some rich Sikhs for sometime and then are sent out to India on sabotage missions.

Terrorism has become a part of organised violence in today's world and its ultimate aim is to create political instability. It has now acquired an international character. The modus operandi of terrorists is almost similar in most of the countries. They indulge in killing of VIPs, hijacking planes, bomb explosions and other such activities of sabotage.

With the advance of technology, the terrorists have also acquired new weapons and new means of communication. They buy the best weapons in the world. They even have remote control bombs and missiles. The problem is made more acute by the fact that the enemy countries provide them with weapons, shelter, training and money in large quantities. There has been a rise in terrorism in the entire world. The newspapers had reported that the extremists had even hired internationally notorious killer Carlos (The Jackal) to kill prominent Indian leaders. He even established some training camps in Nepal and other border areas. Almost a month after the blasts in India, bomb explosions were reported from many places in Nepal. Alarmed, the Nepal Government put all the gurdwaras under strong guard. According to knowledgeable sources, thousand of Sikhs had reached Nepal to escape the manhunt launched in India. It is easy to go abroad from there.

Another reason for increase in international terrorism is that the terrorist groups of West Germany, France and Spain have decided to co-ordinate their actions. As against this, many countries do not even have adequate laws to deal with such crimes.

Where do these terrorists get their money? Organisations with selfish motives, some rich people and even Governments pay them; but mainly their activities are financed by smuggling of drugs. There are syndicates of drug dealers in the so-called developed countries and these syndicates are extremely powerful. One of the drug mafias of America has an annual trade turnover of 150 thousand million dollars. Many syndicates are more powerful than some governments. One syndicate is said to have given a loan of 18 thousand million

dollars within two hours to the government of a certain country.

How terrorism has increased in the last two decades is evident from the fact that there are separate terrorist organisations active in all the five continents. In Europe itself, West Germany, France, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Italy and Turkey each have more than one terrorist organisation. In South and Central America, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay have terrorist organisations. In North America and Canada the terrorist activity is well known. Ethiopia in Africa and Japan in East Asia are centres of terrorist activity. West Asia has the maximum number of terrorist organisations—a total of eight and many of them antagonistic. Some of them are extreme leftist groups and some are racists.

### **The Height of Terrorism**

International terrorism reached its dreadful extreme on June 23 when Air India Boeing Kanishka was blown up over the Atlantic killing 329 including women and children. Some Sikh extremists had planned to kill Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to America. There was a conspiracy to kill Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal also when he was in America for an eye operation. But the American intelligence got wise and arrested many suspected Sikhs. Canada-based Amand Singh and Lal Singh were said to be behind the Kanishka bomb blast. The American police was also looking for them in connection with the plot to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. America announced a big reward for information leading to their arrest. These two persons had booked their seats in the said Air India plane. They had their luggage placed in the plane but themselves stayed back. The same two Sikhs had arranged to have another Air India plane blown up in Tokyo airport. Two Japanese porters died while carrying luggage to the plane but the plane itself escaped damage.

So far terrorists had hijacked planes attracting the attention of the world, had their conditions accepted and were responsible for a little bloodshed on the conditions not being met, but they had ultimately surrendered. The planes had not been blown up in this way nor such large scale murders perpetrated. What kind of insane people were these who gave no warning, no time and insulted humanity with their bestiality?

The Palestinians are quite notorious in plane hijackings. They took passengers as hostages and were responsible for bloodshed in wars from Jordan to Lebanon. But no Palestinian has ever thought of blowing up an Israeli or American Plane in mid-air in order to regain

their lost Palestine. The ghost of Bhindranwale seems to have demented them to think that if they blow up an Air India plane, then India will be destroyed.

When the 329 dismembered bodies fell from 31000 feet into the deep ocean, for the first time the world was stunned. The Golden Temple centred terrorism, which had so far troubled India alone, had now shown its ugly face to the world. America's President Reagan also came to realise that if every dissatisfied community in the world had just two 'Lals' of this kind, what would be the state of air travel in the world! Concerned, he sent Vice-President George Bush to West Europe on a campaign against international terrorism. But like darkness below the lamp, his attention was not drawn to training centres in America where terrorists were regularly trained. American newspaper 'New York Post' published a story about the Racando school in Alabama where Amand Singh and Lal Singh had received training. The director of this camp, Frank Camper, said that an international Sikh organisation had got from him a blueprint for killing 20 selected Indians in exchange for 10 lakh dollars. This school had also trained six Sikh youths in making explosives and poisoning water. Plans had been prepared to destroy Indian property abroad. There are many such schools in America. So far the countries of West Europe and America have been indifferent to the activities of Sikh terrorists. Repeated reminders failed to alert Britain and Canada towards these people. This tragic plane disaster should have opened their eyes.

Referring to the 10-11 May transistor bomb incidents, Baba Joginder Singh had said these were all the doings of the Government. Will he now say that the Government had blown up its own plane? If it were so then why did Canada declare a day of national mourning and why were the flags at half-mast in Ireland? Was this too a ruse to win the elections? People of this mentality might someday declare that Indira Gandhi had herself ordered her bodyguards to shoot her so that Rajiv Gandhi could become the Prime Minister!

Eminent Journalist Rajendra Mathur has this to say about the Kanishka blast:

"In April 1985 it was being said with great emphasis that the issue before the Sikhs was whether they could live in this country with self-respect. But after the incidents of May and June the question before them is whether they would be able to isolate the extremists and find a sane leadership which can present their proper demands in a balanced way. If the certificate for a return of self-respect is also to be given by the extremists, then two consequences will follow. The extremists will never say that they

are satisfied and the Government would be compelled to take steps which would hurt their pride. Therefore the encouragement to the self-respect syndrome and asking for the moon would not solve the problem but worsen it. The initiative would go into the hands of those who consider 31 October, 10-11 May and 23 June as the solution of the Sikh problem. If a child keeps moving his tongue over his broken tooth, then the new tooth would be malformed. Wisdom lies in the course that the issue of self-respect should not be raked again and again.

"Secondly, the Sikh leaders will have to free themselves of the complex that talking to the Government is a sign of betrayal and that true Sikhism is to be always in a state of confrontation with it. It is because of this complex that the Sikh leaders even today keep talking about starting *morchas*. How a *morcha* turns into a religious war and how a religious war ultimately throws up a Bhindranwale is what we have already seen. Is it necessary to repeat this history? The intentions may be noble but a straight line links Akali *morchas* with Bhindranwale, June '84 with the murder of Indira Gandhi and the November riots, and the riots with the terrorism of May and June 1985. Anybody who decides to run on this straight line will ultimately fall in the same old ditch and will then say he is not being allowed to live with self-respect in India."

### **Seeds of Folly**

How this thousand-fanged terrorism is spreading its fangs and how each one of its fangs is attacking humanity is clear from the killing of 60 Sikhs, 22 crew and 26 children in the Kanishka blast. They don't care who dies. Even words like demon and beast do not fully measure up to the meanness and barbarity of such people. In the words of Khushwant Singh, the only punishment is dropping them into the sea from the height of 31,000 ft.

The history of the sentiments, which have made the terrorists so reckless, may be new but its seeds were sown long back:

1. The Sikh people are incited by telling them that the Sikhs have been insulted and it is their duty to take revenge.

2. Just as they succeeded in creating Pakistan by instilling separatist feelings among Muslims, in the same way the British filled Sikh minds with the fear of losing their identity in the vast sea of Hinduism.

3. Just as the Indian Muslims remained aloof from the national

mainstream and now there is the effect of separatist feelings among a large section of Kashmiri Muslims, the same mentality has been nibbling the border states of North-East and Punjab's extremists.

The terrorism of the North-Eastern States turns out to be comparatively civilised. The political violence in Assam is in fact quite different from separatism. It is born of the fear that the large number of Bangladeshis infiltrating into the State may in future start raising the slogan of separatism. But the Khalistani terrorism has shaken not only India but the entire world. The saving grace is that all responsible Sikhs have condemned this despicable form of terrorism. If even after this incident there is no anger in Sikh society against terrorism then they are on the path of suicide.

### **Terrorism Suicidal**

Terrorism is suicidal because an entire group or community cannot take part in terrorist activity. Only a handful can do so. Even Chou-en-Lai had told the Naxalites that by underground terrorist activity, they had cut themselves off from the people. That is why they could not become a people's movement. And that which is not a people's movement, can easily be dealt with by the Government. Such terrorist violence can last only as long as it keeps getting help from abroad. China has never helped the Naxalites to an extent that it could turn into an India-China war. Pakistan may show great sympathy to the Khalistanis but it will never dare to provoke war against India over this issue. Specially when it knows that beyond the Khyber Pass lies that ferocious Russian bear who is friendly towards India. On one side is the India that humiliated 92000 Pakistani soldiers in Bangladesh and on the other the world's second big power, the Soviet Union, pinning Afghanistan down. What can be the condition of the country lying in-between is well known to Pakistan. Pakistan also knows that America might give it all kinds of weapons and dollars too, but would never send its own troops to fight on the side of Pakistan. By sending its troops into Vietnam, the American Government has already turned its people against such a course.

### **False Pride**

All Akalis, whether extremists or moderates, are filled with a false pride:

"We provide food to India. If we had not started the green revolution in Punjab, Indians would have died of hunger."

"Indian foreign exchange has swelled only because of the large amount of money that our brothers and relatives send from abroad." "Our number in the armed forces, particularly among officers, is much larger than the average—therefore we deserve a special status."

As far as the green revolution is concerned, it was brought about by the labour of entire India and not merely the Sikhs. The Bhakra Nangal dam and Chandigarh were built with the means of the entire country, and not merely those of Punjab. The Centre provided to Punjab facilities of cheap water, electricity, farm implements and loans from nationalised banks at cheaper rates. Such facilities were given to no other State. The green revolution is a result of all these facilities, and not merely the labour of Punjab farmers. The biggest proof of this is Haryana. As long as it was within Punjab, the Sikh mentality exploited the people of this backward region and never gave them just treatment. After separation from Punjab and given a fraction of the facilities provided to Punjab, Haryana has almost equalled Punjab in green revolution. Hard work is not the monopoly of the Punjab farmer; the Haryana farmer is no less hard working.

The same can be said about North-Western U.P. The belt comprising Ghaziabad, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Baraut, Saharanpur and Dehra Dun is famous for sugarcane cultivation and also as Chaudhari Charan Singh's area of influence. This area is no less than Punjab in green revolution. If the residents of this area start saying that they provide sugar to the entire country and without their help the country could be starved of sugar, therefore they should be given a special status, should their demand be accepted? The country gets its coal from the mines of Bihar, iron from Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Should the nation be left to their mercy?

There is another aspect of Punjab's green revolution which has not been given much attention. The land reform laws have not been applied to Punjab in the way these have been applied to other States. That is why nowhere else are there as many big farmers as in Punjab. Zamindari abolition laws have been applied to other States but not in Punjab. Most of the benefit of farming facilities given ever since the British times has gone to the big farmers. The greatest disparity in connection with farming exists in Punjab alone. On one side there are small farmers who cannot even think of using scientific methods. They have so little land that they are happy if they can grow enough cereals to feed their families. On the other side are the big farmers who have many tractors, chemical fertilisers, hybrid seeds, own tubewells and generators and they make lakhs by selling tonnes of wheat they

produce in their farms. These big farmers have all the luxuries which could be available to the richest in any big city. Over 70 percent land of Punjab is in the hands of these few big farmers. The small farmers have only six per cent land among them. The big farmers are all Jat Sikhs. The small farmers are mostly *Majhabi* Sikhs. It is the big farmers who, through their lobby, oppose tax on farm income. There is thus no limit to their income. Their children study abroad. When their sons and daughters come home, they ignore the ancient Indian and Sikh traditions in their enthusiasm for modern western civilization. Then their parents start worrying about protecting their religion. The backbone of the Akali agitation are these Jat farmers. In fact the green revolution itself is the source of the Akali agitation. When these rich children of the green revolution started hungering for power, and when they found that power could not be had through normal means, then they took to the path of terrorism.

### **Hatred for Majhabi Sikhs**

These Jat Akali leaders harbour the same kind of secret hatred for *Majhabi* Sikhs as the traditional *Brahmins* have towards untouchables. When Jagiwan Ram was the Defence Minister of the country, he unveiled the statue of Dr Sampurnanand in Varanasi. The *Pandits* of Kashi could not tolerate this. They felt that the statue had been defiled by the touch of a Harijan. The statue was washed in Ganga water to purify it. The same thing happened with the Akal Takht also. Baba Santa Singh is a *Majhabi* Sikh. At a moment of crisis he came forward to lead the *Kar Sewa* to rebuild the Akal Takht. But the *granthis* washed the Akal Takht with milk, then with Sarovar water and then only accepted it as pure.

Till today the Akal Takht *granthis* have never declared a Jat Sikh as *Tankhaiya* (renegade). Their mentality is satisfied only by declaring non-Jat Sikhs as *Tankhaiya*. President Zail Singh was declared *Tankhaiya* because he is a non-Jat Sikh. Sardar Buta Singh was declared *Tankhaiya* because he is a *Majhabi* Sikh. Baba Santa Singh was declared a *Tankhaiya* because he is a *Majhabi* Sikh.

This hatred towards *Majhabi* Sikhs reached its peak when after being released from jail, Mr Tohra declared that the Akal Takht would be demolished and rebuilt. The Akal Takht had been only recently purified with the use of milk and Sarovar water. How had it become impure again? What was the propriety of all the *hukamnamas* (edicts) issued from this Akal Takht all this while? The Government spent Rs 8 Crore on rebuilding the Akal Takht. Would it be returned to them, as

impure? Has the special marble imported for it from Italy and the gold embedded in its dome also become impure?

### **Bharat Takht**

The Akali leaders have always been putting up Akal Takht in competition with the Delhi 'Takht' and claiming that they had always fought the Delhi 'Takht'. In this context they give the example of Mughal times and not the British times. There is a reason for it. The reference to *Khalsa Raj* is in the following couplet:

दिल्ली तख्त पर बहेगी आप गुरु की फौज  
छतर फिरेगा सीस पर, बड़ी करेगी मौज ।  
राज करेगा खालसा, आकी रहे न कोय  
ख्वार होय सब मिलेंगे, बचे सरन जो होय ॥

After conquering Punjab, the British had banned the recitation of this couplet of Gurbani. How could they tolerate rule of anybody else on the Delhi 'Takht'? The Sikh leaders responded by stopping the recitation of the first two lines. Regarding the second two lines they explained that the '*Khalsa*' here meant not the Sikhs but a person pure from the spiritual point of view. This was an old trick. Through this they wanted to keep alive an old dream. The British even allowed this!

The same kind of deceit is practised over the Anandpur Sahib resolution. In the 1973 resolution, it was clearly said that some areas from neighbouring States should be given over to Punjab and there should be predomination of *Khalsa* in these areas. Here also the meaning of *Khalsa* predomination was not clear, but secretly it was an invitation for Khalistan—inside India if possible and outside if necessary. In the 'action plan' prepared in Ludhiana in 1978 on the basis of this resolution, Central power has been redefined to provide it a federal shape and give it an extreme left character. The Akali leaders see no difference in the two versions. But actually it is a word-trick to fool the people. It is like a shopkeeper who keeps two signboards and puts them up depending on the type of customer. This is an extreme of opportunism.

The disparity between the small and big farmers spoiled the situation further. The small farmer laboured but the fruits of his labour went to the town trader. Town traders in Punjab are usually non-Sikhs. Therefore, slowly the anger of jobless village Sikhs took a communal turn. The big farmers also fanned this fire. The bitterness increased

and there arose a competition among village Sikhs to go across the border to do smuggling in arms and drugs so as to acquire easy money like the town traders.

Those who set up the Akal Takht in competition with the Delhi 'Takht' do not appreciate that in independent India the Delhi 'Takht' is not any 'Takht' of a King but a democratic 'Takht' elected by the majority. Its defiance is not the defiance of a person but that of the democracy of India.

In fact there is an even bigger 'Takht' than either the Akal Takht or the Delhi Takht. It may be called Bharat Takht. This Bharat Takht is not dependent on a specific person or a place. It is ensconced in the heart of every Indian who wants to keep the country united. The Delhi Takht or even the Akal Takht has some significance only after getting recognition from this Bharat Takht. Because of their narrow-mindedness the Akalis have never cared for this Bharat Takht. Leave aside those outside Punjab, they have never cared for non-Akalis even inside the State.

Mr Tohra says he would have the Akal Takht rebuilt. The *Majhabis* Sikhs say they would construct their own Akal Takht. The solution lies in the SGPC handing over the Akal Takht to Baba Santa Singh in return for his service in rebuilding it. If the Akalis want another Akal Takht, they should construct it in Nankana Sahib. What place could be more sacred than the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev? With the construction of an Akal Takht there, its importance and holiness would increase and the case for giving Nankana Sahib Vatican status would be further strengthened.

### **Another Ray**

We have said before that the night of death is over but there is still time for the morning. Occasionally a golden ray is visible, but the clouds cover it again.

The world reaction against terrorism after the Kanishka disaster has forced the Akali leaders to do some soul-searching. There is no end to the clouds too. In the Ramdas Sarai of the Golden Temple, where Bhindranwale used to hold his court, over 300 Sikh students vowed to follow the footsteps of Bhindranwale on 5 July. But the speech that Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal delivered in Sangrur, criticising the terrorists and calling for Hindu-Sikh unity, provided the welcome sight of dispelling the crowds.

He said:

"No true Sikh can kill innocent Hindus. If a Sikh kills an innocent

Hindu, then he kills Guru Teg Bahadur and he cannot be considered a true Sikh.

② "Hindus and Sikhs are the two children of the same parents. The fight of my party is against the Government and not against Hindus. Nobody can weaken the years' old love between the Hindus and Sikhs. The Hindus should help the Akali Dal in securing the common political, economic and territorial demands."

③ "The Sikhs have always made sacrifices for the unity and the defence of the nation. They cannot even think of harming the interest of the nation. The Anandpur Sahib resolution is not merely for Punjab but for the entire nation. But if the Hindus still have some doubts over it, the issue can be discussed again."

④ "We should take a strong stand against Sikh terrorism so as to remove the fear in the minds of Hindus. There is no place for hatred and terrorism in the Sikh community and it is against the teachings of the Gurus."

If Sant Longowal had said this three or four years before, then Punjab might have been saved the agony of going through a violent storm.

— If at that time an edict had been given that anybody shedding the blood of an innocent Hindu is not a true Sikh of the Guru;

— If the Akali leaders had declared that Hindus and Sikhs are the children of the same parents;

— If the Akali leaders had gone to wipe the tears of the bereaved Hindu families;

— If the extremists had been challenged then itself and the hoarding of arms and fortifications in the Golden Temple had not been allowed and anti-national elements not given shelter there;

— If they had taken the non-Akalis also into confidence and instead of linking them with religion, should have made these the common demands of Punjabis;

— If they had not made the Anandpur Sahib resolution a prestige issue and offered to make changes in its objectionable parts.

Then the bloodbath in Punjab would not have taken place, nor the Sikhs and the country faced so many problems.

Still, better late than never. □